NEAREST AND DEAREST

BY MRS. SOUTHWORTH

12 –

To Emma
From Henry

Nearest and Dearest

A Novel

By MRS. E. D. E. N. SOUTHWORTH

Author of

"Gloria," "Em," "For Whose Sake," "Lilith,"
"The Unloved Wife," Etc.

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NEAREST AND DEAREST

CHAPTER I

THE WOLF'S HEAD

"THERE is a story connected with that house, so strange, frightful and mysterious that I doubt if anything like it ever happened in this world before."

The speaker was one of a small party of friends, who, on a fine spring afternoon, were driving along an abandoned turnpike, through the forest a few miles north of Washington, where they came suddenly upon an old, deserted mansion standing on the left side of the road.

It was a huge, square, stone building, with all its doors and windows gone, and nothing left but its walls, its chimneys and its roof, around which the encroaching growth of the wildwood pressed so closely that the young trees seemed to prop the old ruins.

"What place is this?" inquired an inquisitive girl.

"I am going to tell you. This solitary old road was, once upon a time, the great highway between the new city of Washington and all the North. And this old ruin was once the famous Wolf's Head, where the stage-coaches on this line stopped to change horses and the passengers to take meals or lodgings, as the case might require," explained the first speaker.

"But the story, ma'am?" urged the curious schoolgirl.

"It was something that occurred in the early days of the city, to a happy bridal pair. On a pleasant May morning, a joyous party consisting of the bride and bridegroom, attended, as was the fashion of those days, by their bridesmaids and groomsmen, set out from the city to commence their wedding tour. In the evening they reached this house, the Wolf's Head Tavern, then in its glory. Here they intended to stay until the morning. But who can foresee fate? For here, in the dead of night, there happened something so dark, terrible, mysterious and utterly inexplicable, that surely its like never occurred to human being, or in human dwelling. But the story is too long to tell here, and now. Remind me to relate it when we reach home," said the leader of the party, as she turned the horse's head and took the way back to the city.

The promised story was not told that evening. Unforeseen events prevented its narration. But I shall tell it now, in the following pages—veiling real names under fictitious ones.

At the time of our tale, Washington city was a vast anomaly. It was then only a few years since the site had been settled, and it soon became the scene of the wildest speculations and of the most startling transitions from poverty to wealth that has ever been seen in a civilized community.

Land agents, merchants and mechanics, whose business lay in building and building materials, were in some cases making rapid fortunes, and in others losing all the little they had ever possessed; for the growth of the new city was not at all commensurate with the expectations of the speculators. So that some of the handsomest houses remained vacant for years, until they fell

into a state of dilapidation, and became the tenements of the poorest class of English and Irish emigrants.

Among the least fortunate of these speculators was Duncan Roslyn, a Baltimore merchant, who sold out his business in "the monumental city" and moved to Washington with his family, which consisted of his second wife, Zora, a pretty widow whom he had recently married, his son by his first marriage, Lancelot, a boy ten years old, his little step-daughter, Nerissa Lovel, a child of three, and his beautiful ward, Eldiva Lisburne, a girl of fourteen. They were attended by two negro servants, Bigelow, or "Old Biggs," and Appolonia, or "Aunt Apple."

Duncan Roslyn had leased a house on one of the grandest new avenues leading due south from the capitol to the Anacostia River, a fine old mansion, that had stood upon the same ground since the first settlement of the country.

It was "Shadow Hall." It had once been a grand manor hall, surrounded by an extensive park and forest called "The Shadows"; but now it was nothing but a very dark old house on the new avenue, with none of its ancient possessions except the large garden, poultry-yard and out-buildings appertaining to the old country home, which suddenly found itself in the midst of new and fashionable city company.

The house had stood untenanted for more than twenty years. And there was good reason why it should have done so.

A terrible tragedy, a thunderbolt of ruin, had suddenly fallen upon guilt and passion, and had terminated, in dishonor and death, that long line of Moncktons, lords of the manor of "The Shadows," and denizens of the

land from the date of the royal patent granted to their ancestors by King Charles the Second.

After the extinction of the direct line the manor fell to the next of kin—a wealthy English nobleman—who, caring little for this transatlantic inheritance, sold it to a speculator, who divided the land into building lots, which he sold in his turn, leaving nothing but Shadow Hall, with its luxuriant old garden, its yards and out-houses, all of which were offered for rent or for sale.

Still, for a long period the mansion stood vacant. Shadow Hall, as a dwelling-place, could not be endured by flesh and blood.

Ever since the fatal night of the catastrophe that had desolated the house, Shadow Hall had the ill reputation of being haunted. By late foot-passengers on the avenue spectre lights had been seen, and shrill shrieks had been heard in the dark, deserted house. The troubled spirits of the lovers who had been slain in each other's arms, and the guilty spirit of the murderer and suicide, were said to wander there at night through all the rooms. The ghost of the woman had been seen oftenest, and by the greatest number of witnesses, who whispered that she was not arrayed in the white garments of blessed spirits, nor in the black ones of lost souls, but in a long, flowing, red robe, which trailed behind her as she paced up and down the halls, weeping, wringing her hands, and pleading, or seeming to plead to be heard.

It was in the early spring that Duncan Roslyn and his family first moved into the "manor house," as it was commonly called, in contradistinction to the rows of brick houses on the opposite side of the avenue.

The children were delighted with the garden, which was now a perfect thicket of blooming roses and spring flowers, with patches of strawberry beds and many fruit

trees, all inclosed in a high wall, overgrown with luxuriant hedges of raspberry and blackberry vines; and they roved about in wild joy, while the elder members of the household were settling things within doors.

No one objected to the house but Old Biggs, who declared most solemnly that human nature could never live and prosper there.

He claimed to know about the horrible catastrophe which had overwhelmed and destroyed the last Monckton of The Shadows.

He said that he had heard the story from his old Uncle Ambrose, who had been body-servant with young Mr. Rolfe Monckton, when that unhappy gentleman, in a fit of frenzy slew his bride and her cousin, and then shot himself.

Old Biggs said that his Uncle Ambrose had often and often both seen and heard the lost and wandering spirits of those miserable sinners, for after the tragedy he had been left in charge of the house, until the ghosts killed him, and he was found dead in his bed one morning. Since that no one could be got to take care of the place for love or money.

Old Biggs wondered, so he did, how a 'spectable, 'sponsible ge'man like Marse Duncan could put his innocent family in such a place to be worried to death.

"Oh, shet up, Old Man Biggs," exclaimed Aunt Apple, who did not share her fellow-servant's superstitious fears. "De house is a good house nuff! *I* likes it, I do!"

This conversation took place in the kitchen, where Aunt Apple, assisted by Old Biggs, was preparing the first supper to be eaten in the new house.

As this kitchen became the scene of some strange

events, it is necessary to give my readers some idea of its appearance.

It was a room on the ground-floor, at the rear of the north wing, with a broad, open fireplace on the east side, where it joined the dining-room; a staircase on the south end, leading up to the room above, a large window and door on the west side, opening into the backyard and communicating with an alley leading to the front, and finally with two doors on the north end leading into two little bedrooms, the one nearest the yard being appropriated to Aunt Apple and the one next the dining-room to Uncle Biggs. The furniture of the kitchen was as yet simple enough, consisting of a long oak table under the back window, a few wooden chairs along the walls, and cooking utensils in the dark "cuddy" under the stairs.

It was this north wing of the old house that the family most affected, probably because it was the newest part of the building, in the best repair and nearest the beautiful garden. The children's rooms were over the kitchen. The master and mistress's chamber, over the dining-room, opened upon a broad porch overlooking the garden, which was divided from the house only by the narrow alley of the servants' entrance.

On the first evening of their arrival supper was served to the family in the dining-room next this kitchen. A fine, cheerful room it was, opening upon the lower, broad porch, alley and garden. Its walls were covered with a peculiar sort of paper that was very fashionable at that time, representing rural scenes in France—groves, vineyards, chateaux and cottages, with groups of vine-dressing peasants, or piping and dancing youths and maidens—all producing a very lively effect, which became the especial delight of the child Nerissa.

Mr. Roslyn was a tall, fair, handsome man, of about forty-five years of age. Mrs. Roslyn was a pretty little brunette of thirty.

They had been married but a few months when they came to Washington, and were very much attached to each other and to the children by their former marriages. Indeed, Mr. Roslyn's niece, Eldiva Lisburne, declared that her uncle loved his little step-daughter, Nerissa, better than his own son; and her aunt loved her step-son, Lancelot, more than her own daughter.

But this was, probably, only a generous emulation of the parents in kindness to each other's children.

In a few weeks the family were comfortably settled in the old house.

The two elder children were sent to school. Eldiva was placed at the Georgetown Convent of the Visitation, and Lancelot at the Jesuits' College, in the same locality. These were the very best and almost the only places of education in the district. By special arrangement the children were permitted to return home every Saturday and remain until Monday.

Old Biggs had complained of strange sights and sounds that disturbed his sleep; but had been sternly rebuked by his master, who ordered him *never* to utter such nonsense again, under penalty of his severest displeasure.

So Old Biggs only talked to the neighbors' servants, and spread the dark reputation of the haunted house behind his master's back.

Mrs. Roslyn herself was sometimes frightened in the night by unaccountable sights and sounds; but Mr. Roslyn always had an explanation ready. It was the wind sighing around the eaves of the house, or rats running through the hollow partitions, or bricks and

plaster falling down the old chimney. And once when his wife started in the night, and, bathed in a cold perspiration, shrieked that a cold hand had clasped her fingers, and a weeping woman's face had bent closely down to gaze at hers, Mr. Roslyn declared that it was all "imagination," and showed so much anger toward his dear Zora as to frighten her from ever mentioning the subject again.

And before the summer was over the family moved into the front building, facing the avenue where the master and mistress had a large, bright room, where the morning sun shone in between the shade of the tall Lombardy poplar trees, and where Nea and her nurse had the little hall chamber adjoining.

Here they suffered no more nocturnal disturbance, and hence grew the report that the rear building contained the only haunted chambers.

Meanwhile, Old Biggs prophesied that nothing but misfortune would ever happen to a family that dared to live in Shadow Hall, a house with a black curse upon it.

And as time passed it really seemed as if the old fellow's predictions must be fulfilled.

Mr. Roslyn was a man with a very sanguine temperament, and he had—to use a homely expression—"Too many irons in the fire."

After the first year his affairs began to fall into embarrassment. After the second year affairs grew still worse. After three years' struggle to keep up his business he put all his property into the hands of creditors, paid a hundred cents in the dollar on all his debts, and after the settlement, had nothing left but his lease of Shadow Hall, his household furniture and plate, and a few domestic animals, such as a horse, a cow, pigs, and a variety of poultry. The negro servants were the prop-

erty of Mrs. Roslyn, and had come with her from St. Mary's county.

So much confidence had men in the integrity of Duncan Roslyn, and so much sympathy with his misfortunes, that his creditors, having their claims now fully satisfied, would willingly have advanced money to give him a fresh start in business, but that the man's health was utterly broken down, so that a congestive chill, caught on the marshy flats of the city, in the autumn of his third year's residence, put a speedy end to his earthly career.

For weeks after her sudden bereavement his widow was too utterly overwhelmed by her loss to think of her financial circumstances or of her future. Bills came in for the girl's and the boy's schooling, but received no attention from her. The doctor's and undertaker's accounts were utterly disregarded. An epidemic of typhus fever broke out in the city without disturbing her in the least. In short, nothing could arouse her from the apathy of despair until her only child, her little Nerissa, was stricken with the fever and quickly brought to the verge of the grave.

Then, indeed, the mother, stung to action by keen anxiety, became the most assiduous attendant and the most devoted nurse of the little patient sufferer.

Nerissa recovered, but not without great misfortune, the effect of that fearful fever. As she convalesced it was noticed that her sight seemed dim. In looking at any object she would hold it very close to her eyes, or sideways, to the right or left, as if trying to see it more distinctly. Sometimes in crossing a room she would come in collision with a chair or table.

These circumstances at first gave Nerissa's friends no uneasiness.

"The child is weak and nervous after her long illness, but she will outgrow this," said the mother; and every one believed the words.

But the child herself began to complain. She could not see the big letters on her alphabet card. She could not see her doll's face. Every day little Nerissa repeated these words, or others to the same effect.

She went to the office of Dr. Hamilton—who was their neighbor and lived in a new red brick house on the same side of the avenue, a little farther down toward the river—and told him all about Nerissa's fast failing sight.

The family physician—who thought the case very serious, even from the boy's crude description—went the next morning and made an examination of his little patient's eyes, and then pronounced an opinion that plunged the whole family in grief and the mother in despair.

The child, he said, was afflicted with amaurosis, or darkening of the eyes, from the failure of the optic nerve—a malady which medical skill was utterly powerless to control. The most that could be done for her would be to build up her constitution and leave the rest to nature. There *had* been rare cases of this disease in childhood, where, with the growth of the patient, the optic nerve had gradually recovered its vitality and restored the sight. This was the only hope, a very faint and remote one.

Of course, the little Nerissa had not heard the doctor pronounce this sentence which condemned her to almost hopeless darkness for the term of her natural life; but yet it seemed impossible to keep the sad truth from her. Indiscreet words dropped now and then, exclamations of pity or distress, information conveyed in a low tone to

visiting neighbors, who were full of condolences—all these avenues were constantly open to the child, who soon began to suspect the full weight of the calamity hanging over her.

"Am I going to be blind? Am I going to be blind *always?*" she would ask in the most pathetic manner—now of her mother, now of Eldiva, or of Lance, or of the colored people.

And almost every one encouraged her to hope, while they treated her with more affection and indulgence than they had ever shown before.

But the most devoted of Nerissa's friends was certainly Lancelot. Little Nerissa had always been very fond of Lance, and now he returned her affection abundantly. Every one who ever saw them together noticed the strange attachment between the boy and the blind baby—for they were little more than boy and baby—Lance being then about fourteen years of age, and Nea six.

Lance had left college at the end of the last term, because there was no money to pay his fees. And now, having nothing else to do, he gave himself up to take care of Nea. It was Lance who read stories to her, taught her hymns and songs, wound up her musical instrument, and bought her little pets. Once he bought her a pair of young Guinea pigs, for which he gave a sailor his spy-glass, and with which the child was delighted.

It was Lance who took her out to walk in the shady and fragrant garden, and plucked for her plums and peaches and other late autumn fruits; or led her along the sunny avenue, whose sidewalks were flanked with natural hedges of wild rose, eglantine, and dogwood bushes; or when she was tired, lifted her in his arms and

carried her. And Nea never seemed so content as when he held her in this way, with her hands clasped around his neck, and her failing eyes hidden on his shoulder.

Every one said it was difficult to understand the boy's devotion to the baby. But, then, Lance had not a blood relation in this world, so far as he knew. Mrs. Roslyn was his step-mother, and he liked her well enough; but she was not his own mother, and she had no need of him.

Nea was his step-sister, and not his own sister; but, then, she *had* need of him, every hour in the day, poor, little, helpless, blind baby! and she repaid his devotion to her with warmest love and gentlest caresses.

There was something pathetic in the child's efforts to strain her sight and see her friends as long as she could, until at last, when weeks had passed, she could only see their faces as faint vapors.

Her latest vision of material scenes was in the strong contrast of light and darkness as seen in the rising or the setting of the sun on clear days.

To give her this enjoyment, the boy would life her out of bed in the morning, wrap her in a shawl, and take her out before the front of the house and turn her face to the east, where the sun would rise above the green hills of Maryland, beyond the Anacostia River, and flood all the horizon with light.

She could see the blaze of morning dimly, as we might see a very distant illumination at midnight, and she would smile quietly and silently for a while, and then sometimes she would fold her hands and whisper, reverently:

"It is like opening the gates of Heaven, Lance! Oh! Lance, I pray the dear Lord will leave me this much sight—to see the gates of Heaven open like this."

"Yes, dear little Nea, I know—I know—I know He will!" the boy would answer, with the greatest confidence, though often with a voice choked by emotion.

He would sit there with Nea as long as she liked to remain, and then go in and put her in the hands of her nurse to be dressed for breakfast.

Late in the afternoon he would take her up to the back window of the little nursery over the kitchen to see the sun set behind the Virginia hills beyond the Potomac River, seeming to kindle water, land and sky into a conflagration.

Again the vivid, brilliant light and color, with its strong contrasts, would reach the failing eyes of the blind child, something like a splendid aurora borealis seen by us at night, and she would clasp her hands in deep delight and murmur:

"Oh! if the good Lord will only leave me sight enough to see the gates of glory open and shut morning and evening!"

"He will!—He will!—He will! dear little Nea," the boy would answer confidently, with his broken voice.

But a trouble was coming to the child that seemed to her harder to bear than even her blindness. A long-promised midshipman's warrant, that the boy had despaired of receiving, was suddenly given to Lancelot Roslyn, and he was ordered immediately to join the *Porpoise* man-of-war, then about to sail from the Navy Yard to the Mediterranean Sea.

The news fell like a thunderbolt on the family at Shadow Hill; but Lancelot was provided for, and every one said that they *ought* to be glad, if they were not so.

Mrs. Roslyn sold her tea service of silver plate to buy an outfit for her step-son, and set about helping Lance to pack his sea-chest.

Nea, when she heard that Lance was going away, wondered much, but did not then grieve, for she had no practical experience in the pain of parting.

Mrs. Roslyn had a hearty cry while she and her step-son were packing his sea-chest together.

"Oh, Lance!" she said, "I hate for you to go! I hate to lose you; but there is nothing else to do, I suppose! It is all for the best?"

"Yes, mamma, it is all for the best; and I will send *all* my pay home to you except just what is absolutely necessary to keep me decent. I will never use tobacco, nor wine, nor spirits, nor anything else that is useless or hurtful; but I will save everything I can for you and Nea," earnestly replied the boy.

"I know! I know, Lance! and I am glad to know this, for your sake as well as for ours! And Nea! Oh, my poor, little, helpless, patient, blind child! What is to become of her? What will be her future life?" exclaimed the mother, in a sudden paroxysm of distress.

Lance paused in his work and looked at her in great tribulation.

"It is not only that she will be blind, but she will be poor and friendless! What has she to hope for in life, my poor little, sightless child? She can never live a girl's life of hope, or a woman's life of love. She can never marry!—Never! She must be alone, if she lives, alone and unloved to her life's end!"

"Mamma!" said the boy, in a low, guttural tone, as he unconsciously pressed both hands upon his chest, as if to keep down the emotion of pity that was suffocating him—"Mamma! *no!* as long as I live in this world, Nea shall *never* be alone, *never* be unloved. If Nea can never be married because she will always be blind, why, then, neither will I ever be married because she cannot

be! I will live for Nea! You will take care of her while I am at sea, and when I come home I will come to you both."

"Ah, my boy!" said the lady, with a sad smile. "You mean all this now! You speak sincerely; but, after all, Lance, we are no real kin to you. We have no sort of claim upon you! You are launched on the sea of life now, and have a right to make the voyage of life untrammelled by us!"

"Mamma!" interrupted the boy, speaking with as much deep earnestness as if his years had been thirty-four instead of fourteen. "I tell you I give my life to Nea! She is more to me than all the world! She is—oh!—She is dearer and nearer to me than anything else in life! Little, blind Nea!" he murmured, in a tone of infinite tenderness. "She is and she always shall be—my *nearest and dearest.*"

"God bless you, Lance! Heaven grant that it may be as you say! But that is a very selfish prayer! Why should your strong life be bound down to the needs of a poor little blind child?"

"Because she is my nearest and dearest," replied the boy, with a deep, sweet smile, as if he had found the precise words that expressed his feeling and explained his action.

That afternoon Lancelot took Nerissa once more to the nursery window, to see the sunset, *dimly* as she always saw it, even at its brightest.

He did not tell her that it was the last sunset they would see together for years; but he was even more than unusually tender and affectionate to the child, and lingered with her at the window until the last light had faded out from the western horizon, and the stars began to appear.

Nea could not see the stars; but presently she clapped her hands with glee, and exclaimed:

"I can see dim, red spots on the ground! I know what they are! They are the brick-kiln fires!"

Yes, they were the brick-kiln fires, glowing, sparkling and blazing with the most intensely vivid light, yet to little Nea's blind eyes they were only dim, red spots on the dark ground.

And while Nea looked at them, she felt that she was not quite, *quite* blind. They lingered at the window until they were called to tea.

The next morning, as usual, Lance lifted Nea out of bed, wrapped her in a shawl, and took her out before the house to see the sun rise.

It happened to be an unusually clear and brilliant morning, and the eastern horizon looked like a celestial conflagration, flaming up over earth and sky.

"Oh! Lance! are the gates wide, *wide* open, and do I see better than ever?" cried the child, in delight.

"The gates *are* wide opened, and you do see better, Nea," answered the boy.

They lingered as long as they could, and then Lancelot lifted Nerissa up, to carry her into the house.

"You are too good to me, Lance. You are the best brother in the whole world!" said the child, as she put her arms around his neck and laid her head on his shoulder.

"Who would not be good to you, little Nea?" murmured the boy, tenderly.

"Everybody is good, but you are the best, Lance! But oh, Lance!" she added, in a troubled tone, "what do you suppose Diva says? She says I am not your own little sister at all! I am not any kin to you! not anything to you. But it is not so. She is mistaken! She

does not know, does she, Lance? I *am* something to you, Lance!"

"Yes, you are, little Nea, you are nearest and dearest. Say it after me, little Nea. Nearest and dearest."

"'Nearest and dearest,'" murmured the child, lifting her head and smiling.

"Now remember that when I am gone away, Nea."

"Yes, I will; but you won't stay long," said the child, speaking as if he were only going up in the city on an errand.

"Not longer than I can help, Nea," replied the boy, as he took her upstairs and put her in the hands of her maid.

An hour after that, Lancelot Roslyn, having breakfasted with the family, began his rounds of leave-taking, for he was to join his ship that day.

Finally the moment of parting came. He shook hands with Old Biggs—who gave him a blessing, and would have added a plenty of good advice if the boy had had time to listen—and then went through the same ceremony wtih Aunt Apple, who, as usual, delivered the fruit of the tree of knowledge by saying:

"Now wotever you do, Marse Lance, don't you expect puffection! No! nyther in de ship, nor de sea, nor de wedder, nor de crew!—caze you can't get it, and de sooner you makes up your mind to dat, de better natured you'll be and de happier! And now good-by, young marse, and de Lord bless you."

Lancelot, with Nea in his arms, kissed his stepmother and Eldiva, and then, forcing himself to be merry, pressed Nerissa to his bosom very fondly, pressed his lips to her beautiful, blind eyes, told her always to remember that she was his nearest and dearest, and

then--suddenly sat her down in her mother's lap and ran out of the room.

Not until Lance had been gone some hours did Nea begin to realize what had happened to her. Then she began to grieve, but in so quiet and patient a way that she touched the hearts of all who saw her.

She had but one little plaint:

"I want Lance! Oh, I want Lance!"

Nea did not recover from her grief as quickly as childhood does. Day after day her piteous plaint was heard:

"I want Lance! Oh, I want Lance!"

One morning, when she was sitting curled up on the lounge in the upper front bedchamber, where her mother and her cousin were at work embroidering lace veils, Nea kept up her plaint so long and piteously that Mrs. Roslyn at last lost patience with her little blind daughter, and said, rather sharply:

"Nea, you must hush that. Don't you know that you are worrying us almost to death?"

Nea hushed at once, and the lace-making went on in undisturbed silence.

But after a few minutes, the mother, feeling sorry for the child, glanced toward her, and saw Nea still sitting curled up alone on the lounge, with her tiny hands holding a small handkerchief to her face, and quietly drying her eyes, like some poor, little, wounded, patient woman might do.

CHAPTER II

ELDIVA

A beautiful and happy girl,
With a step as soft as summer air,
And fresh young lips and brow of pearl,
Shadowed by many a careless curl
Of unconfined and flowing hair;
A seeming child in everything,
Save thoughtful brow and ripening charms,
As nature wears the smile of spring
When sinking into summer's arms.—WHITTIER.

ELDIVA LISBURNE was now seventeen years old, and very beautiful. Her form was small, slender, yet well rounded; it was elegant in shape, and graceful in motion. Her head was small and well set upon the lovely rounded throat and bust. Her face was oval, her features were regular and delicate. Her complexion was dark and clear, warming into a rich glow of fire on cheeks and lips. Her eyes were of the darkest gray, shaded with long, black lashes, and arched by jet-black brows. Her hair was black, and wound into a rich braid at the nape of her neck, and rippling in short curls upon her sweet low forehead. Her voice was soft and clear, her laugh was low and silvery. But perfect as she was in form, features and complexion, her greatest charm was, after all, in her soul-kindled countenance, which so often beamed with love or glowed with enthusiasm.

Had Duncan Roslyn lived and prospered, Eldiva Lisburne would now have been brought out into society under the best possible auspices; but the failure and

death of her guardian had enforced a temporary retirement from the world.

Eldiva did not regret this.

She loved her home in Shadow Hall, her aunt, her little cousin, the old negro servants, the household pets, and the animals in the barnyard. She loved all the life about her.

She enjoyed her books, her flowers, her music, painting and embroidery, for she was skilled in many accomplishments, which her aesthetic tastes led her to cultivate. And she enjoyed the society of the near neighbors and intimate friends whom the family were free to receive even during the year of mourning.

And there were a plenty of these to keep the house from being lonely.

First, there was Colonel North, who was in command at the arsenal at Greenleaf's Point, but had his private house and grounds on a green knoll on the banks of the river, where he lived with his handsome daughter, Imperia, a Juno-like blond beauty, who, even now in her sixteenth year, was turning the heads of half the young gentlemen in the city. They came so often to Shadow Hall, and Miss North was the most intimate friend and companion of Eldiva Lisburne.

Then there was Commodore Yorke, in command at the Navy Yard, and his gallant son, Captain Milo Yorke, now home with his father on leave. The commodore was fifty years old, stout and gray; the captain was twenty-five, tall, dark and handsome. They were both good friends of the Roslyns, and it was through the persistent exertions of the son, backed by the great influence of the father, that Lancelot Roslyn had finally obtained his midshipman's warrant.

Next there was Lord John Daw, the brother of an

English duke. This Lord John was a very eccentric Briton, who had come over to the United States in the first years of the existence of Washington City, and had invested largely in real estate. He had been one of the most successful speculators, and now, at the end of twenty years, was undoubtedly the wealthiest as well as the haughtiest man in Washington. He was indeed insufferably insolent. From an immense height of pretension he looked down upon the Roslyns, whose acquaintance he had formed during some business transaction with the head of that family.

"Roslyn was a good name," he said to his confidential agent, Richard Daly—"a very good old Scotch name; but they were nothing but trades people—nothing but trades people! and he did not know how officers of the army and navy, who were necessarily gentlemen, could associate on equal terms with them! But, then, in this half-barbarous country all social barriers seemed to be thrown down!"

Very few of these "barbarians" gave this English lord his title, which was only one of courtesy at best. They called him Old John Daw behind his back, and only Mr. Daw to his face. This invariably put him in a fume, which he was not always dignified enough to hide. He was about fifty-five years old, stout, with a fair, rosy, clean-shaven face, and short-cut hair as white as snow. He always wore a black coat, black knee breeches, long, black silk stockings and low shoes with large silver buckles—although this style of dress had then gone out of fashion.

He was a widower, with but one son, who was on his travels in Europe, but was expected home before the meeting of Congress.

This son, named for his father John Daw, was born

in England and had never been to the United States. When the father emigrated he left the son at Eton College, from which, in due time, he went to Oxford, where he spent several years. For the last two years the young man had been traveling.

Lord John Daw lived alone in a very handsome house, surrounded by extensive grounds, on Capitol Hill, with an establishment of servants that might have sufficed for a family of twenty.

He received no company, except at occasional dinner parties given to gentlemen alone.

Perhaps it was the solitude of his house that drove him so often to Shadow Hall, for it was a laughable certainty that while he affected to look down upon "those trades people," he could not keep away from the Roslyns.

He was their landlord, and though he was reputed to be a very hard one to all his other tenants, exacting the last penny of rent and ejecting delinquents on the first failure of payment, yet after the death of Mr. Roslyn he instructed his land agent, Richard Daly, not to press the widow. And so, poor, little, careless, easy-going Zora Roslyn, when she got the quarterly bills, put them away carefully with her other bills in the japan box, and as she was not dunned she did not pay. In fact, she could not pay without selling some of her personal property. She knew that she would have to make this sacrifice some time or other, but she was disposed to put off the evil day as long as possible.

And, meantime, she was living on credit, and living—not extravagantly, for she bought no more than she was obliged to get, but very expensively, and for this reason:

Zora Roslyn—unlike her late husband, who had no blood relations except his son—Zora Roslyn was blessed

with an army of uncles, aunts and cousins, who were living down in Maryland, and who came up in large detachments every winter to do their shopping, and to enter into some of the many gayeties of the season. They did not know that they were helping to ruin the widow, and she would have died sooner than give them a hint to that effect. And they, in their turn, would have willingly entertained her and her whole household all the summer, as she knew very well.

Early in December of the second year after the death of Mr. Roslyn, a large party came up from St. Inigoes to spend a few weeks. Among them was Mrs. Roslyn's old Uncle and Aunt Wells, and her three cousins—Avonia Sothoron, Phœbus Verne and Neil Carnes.

Avonia Sothoron was the niece of Mrs. Wells, and Phœbus Verne was the nephew of Mr. Wells. They were both orphans and the adopted children of the kindly couple, who meant to leave them all their property, without the usual condition that they should intermarry to keep the estate, and this, perhaps, was the very best way of insuring a love match between them.

Avonia Sothoron was a very pretty girl of sixteen years, of medium height, with a fresh complexion, hazel eyes, and brown hair.

Phœbus Verne was a long-limbed youth of nineteen years, with a rosy complexion, blue eyes and red hair. He admired his cousin, Avonia, without the slightest reference to her half of the expected inheritance.

Besides these visitors, there was Neil Carnes, a half-brother of the late Lucius Lovel, and an uncle of Nea. He was a bachelor of about forty years of age, engaged in the practice of law at Leonard Town, in Maryland. In person he was a short, thick-set man, with a dark and swarthy complexion, black eyes, and coarse black hair

and whiskers—not a handsome man, certainly, yet one who pleased superficial observers by his excellent sentiments and winning manners.

Being a near relation of the family, and a bachelor, he was given the back room over the kitchen, that had once been the nursery.

There were many other visitors in that crowded house, but it is not necessary to particularize them.

Mrs. Roslyn, Eldiva and Nea had to evacuate the best rooms and return again to their deserted chambers in the back buildings. Mrs. Roslyn took her own old room, and with an extra bed, accommodated Eldiva and Nea, while the red-haired Phœbus—being a young bachelor—was put in the little den next to the nursery that had been once occupied by Lance.

This season happened to be one of the gayest that had ever been known in the new city.

The President and his wife held "levees" in the same "White House" that is still doing duty as the Executive Mansion. And they were not nearly so much crowded and far pleasanter than the "receptions" of the present, for, in addition to space and music, they had tea and cakes—in fact, they were simple and hospitable, rather than formal and official.

But the balls of the foreign ministers' wives were stately enough, and enjoyable to all who could get to them; for it was not only necessary to have an invitation and a dress, but it was indispensable to have a carriage in this new city, where the avenues were still like country roads, pretty and pleasant in summer, but nearly impassable in winter, and where the citizens were still "under the necessity of going through a broad morass, or a deep wood of one or two miles, to see their nearest neighbor."

It was at the British minister's ball that Eldiva Lisburne met her destiny in young John Daw.

Eldiva was there, with her circle of young friends—the Juno-like beauty, Imperia North; the blooming Hebe, Avonia Sothoron; the dark and handsome Milo Yorke; and the long-limbed, ruddy-faced and red-haired Phœbus Verne.

Lord John Daw was sauntering through the room, leaning on the arm of his son, a tall, slender, elegantly formed and graceful man about twenty-two years of age, and an aquiline profile, a very fair complexion, very light yellow hair and mustache, and light blue eyes.

In passing through the brilliantly lighted, heavily perfumed, and well-filled yet not crowded rooms, Mr. Daw quietly asked his father:

"Do you know those people sitting on the blue sofa?"

"Yes, Jack, I know them," curtly replied the old gentleman.

"Will you tell me who they are, then?"

"A—some of my tenants—some of the Roslyns from Shadow Hall."

"And that beautiful girl—that lovely little brunette in the black lace dress—is she a Miss Roslyn?" inquired the young man as his gaze was fixed upon Eldiva.

"No, her name is Lisburne," very shortly replied the old gentleman.

"Since you are acquainted with the young lady, will you present me?" persevered the young gentleman.

"No, Jack, that I won't. They are nothing but tradespeople, and have no more business here than my housekeeper or butler."

Mr. John Daw said no more, but later in the evening, while his father was in deep discussion with the min-

ister, the young gentleman slipped away and sought out an acquaintance, Captain Milo Yorke, whom he had seen in conversation with Eldiva, and asked for an introduction to her.

The presentation was made, and John Daw took the vacant seat beside Eldiva Lisburne, while Capt. Milo Yorke led Imperia North to the head of the cotillion that was just forming, and Phœbus Verne followed with Avonia Sothoron.

John Daw and Eldiva Lisburne were left seated alone on the sofa.

This was the beginning of their acquaintance, and the beginning of their mutual passion; for whether it was the effect of the attraction of opposites, of the small, dark, sparkling brunette—whose beauty suggested that of some brilliant, little, tropical bird—and of the tall, fair, cold blonde, for each other, or whether the fascination had its origin in the soul, it is certain that theirs was a case of love at first sight.

Some twenty minutes later Lord John Daw, having missed his son, and looked for him through all the rooms, came peering from side to side toward the sofa in the corner, and found him there.

"Good evening, Miss Lisburne. Jack, I am going home," said the old gentleman.

"Are you, sir? Then, good-night—or shall I see you to your carriage?" inquired the young man, rising.

"You shall see me to my carriage, sir! Good-night, Miss Lisburne."

"Good-night, Lord John," replied the sweet, clear voice.

"*Au revoir,* Miss Lisburne. I hope to find you here when I return?" said the young man, gayly.

"Oh, yes, I am a 'wall-flower' to-night," lightly replied the girl.

"Humph! humph! humph!" grunted Lord John Daw. "Come along, Jack.

The two gentlemen walked away, threading through the brilliant crowd, out of the room, down the stairs and to the lower hall, where they had to wait until Lord John's carriage was brought up.

"You must go home with me, Jack," said the old gentleman as soon as he found himself alone with his son in front of the hall.

"Are you not well, sir?" inquired the young man.

"Yes, you young dog, but you must go home with me all the same."

"Very well, sir, I will go," said the young man, with a quiet smile.

"I don't wish you to pursue your acquaintance with that girl, Jack! Who introduced you?" inquired Lord John, as soon as they were seated in the carriage and the wheels were in motion.

"Capt. Yorke, my lord."

"That's it! An officer in the army introduces the grandson of a duke to a tradesman's daughter in the drawing-rooms of an ambassador! Such an anomaly could not occur in any place on earth except in this capital of a model republic, where all the safeguards of society are thrown down and trampled under foot. Humph! I have lived too long!" said the old gentleman, with a grunt.

"Miss Lisburne is not a tradesman's daughter, sir; she is the daughter of the late Colonel Lisburne of the army, who was killed at the battle of Bladensburg."

"Killed fighting against his lawful sovereign! for mind, King George *is* the lawful sovereign of these

colonies, which will be sure to fall into his hands again, for this so-called republic is nothing better than a stage play on which the curtain will drop sooner or later," snarled the old Tory. "And now look here, Jack——"

"Well, sir!"

"I won't have it! Do you hear me? I won't have it, I say!"

"Won't have what, sir?"

"I won't have you dangling after that girl!"

"Why, sir, I have not known the young lady for more than an hour," said the young gentleman, deprecatingly.

"Oh, I know! You can't deceive me!"

And the old man became silent. When the carriage stopped John Daw got out first, assisted his father to alight, and led him up to the door, which was opened by a tall footman, who at once took his master's hat, and gloves, and cloak—for ample cloaks and not overcoats were then worn.

While this service was going on John Daw slipped quickly and quietly back to the carriage just as it was about to turn toward the stables, jumped in and ordered the disappointed and disgusted coachman to drive back as fast as possible to the British Legation.

The journey both ways had taken an hour. It was after one o'clock when John Daw found himself again before Eldiva Lisburne.

She was sitting on the blue sofa, just where he had left her. She was surrounded by gentlemen, and looking somewhat embarrassed by the number of her worshippers; but as Mr. John Daw joined the circle she looked up and welcomed him back with a smile, which he answered by a frown, for he was unreasonably angry.

Luckily for him, a set of cotillions was forming and the gentlemen, with bows and "au revoir," went off to

keep their engagements with parties previously selected.

"I told you that I was a wall-flower for the evening, and that you would find me here on your return," said Eldiva.

"I am very happy to do so," replied Mr. Daw, as he resumed his old seat by her side. "I was detained longer than I expected to see my father home."

He did not leave her side again that evening until the company broke up and he had placed her in the carriage with her friends.

The next morning, in that pleasant dining-room whose long north windows opened upon the big porch, the alley, and the old garden and groves, and where an open wood fire was burning, and a long, well-spread breakfast table was standing, the family and guests of Shadow Hall were gathered around the board, talking of the ball at the British Legation given on the previous night.

"I hope you had a pleasant evening," said Mrs. Roslyn, beaming on Miss Sothoron.

"Oh, yes!" exclaimed that radiant young woman. "I danced in *every* set! More than half the time with Phœbus, however. And that long-limbed lad came near tripping me up on more than twenty occasions," she added, with a laughing glance toward the offender.

"And you, Eldiva? As you did not enter into any of the festivities, I fear you had a dull evening," said Mrs. Roslyn, kindly, to her favorite niece.

"She!" exclaimed Avonia, before the other could reply. "Why, she was the belle of the ball! Ah! let your quiet girls alone for coquetry! Sitting there in her black lace dress, without an ornament except the tea roses in her hair and on her bosom, never moving from

that corner sofa, she drew a crowd of admirers around her and kept them there all the evening!"

Mrs. Roslyn smiled on her favorite, with a look that said, "Of course, I might have known it."

"Oh, nonsense! How you do exaggerate, Avonia! If any looked at me it was only because I was a new face in the new scene," said Eldiva, with a laugh and a blush.

"And Mr. Daw, then! Did he look at you only because you were a new face? All the faces there must have been new to him. Yet he had eyes for none but yours!" persisted Avonia, for she was a persistent young person.

"*He* is done for—that is certain!" exclaimed Phœbus Verne.

And then all who had been at the ball began to talk of Eldiva's conquest.

"I certainly think he is very much taken with your niece, my dear. He asked permission to call on her here," remarked Mrs. Wells.

"John Daw is certainly a very ambitious match for any young lady—that is, so far as wealth and position go," added Mr. Wells.

"I know nothing about the younger man personally; I have never seen him," said Zora Roslyn; "but if I were Eldiva, I would not marry into that family for anything on earth. I would not be the daughter-in-law of that old man if he were the King of England! No, not to be the Princess of Wales!"

"I wouldn't marry that family for a dollar!" solemnly declared Nerissa, coming to the support of her mother.

"There is no question of marriage whatever!" exclaimed Eldiva, deeply blushing and petulantly pushing

her black ringlets from her forehead. "A gentleman cannot be civil without raising a talk of this kind! It is very bad taste, let me tell you!"

"Oh! Oh! Oh!" laughed Avonia. "There were twenty or more gentlemen who were 'civil' to you last night, but we're not talking of them at all. We were talking of Mr. Jack Daw, who was not only civil, but devoted, infatuated! lost!"

At that moment Gad, the new footman that had been imported form the country to help to wait upon the guests, came in with a card and little waiter, and said:

"For Miss Lisburne."

Eldiva took it and reddened.

"Is it from the Jack Daw?" inquired Avonia, mischievously.

"It is from Mr. John Daw," answered the young girl. "How could any gentleman be so—so—so thoughtless as to come so early, while we are still at breakfast?" she petulantly inquired, half pleased, half vexed by the visit.

"'Early,' my dear? Look at the clock!" exclaimed Mrs. Roslyn. "It is noon; and it is not the visitor who is early, but the breakfast is very late! You were not any of you down until after eleven!"

"Upon my word! what dissipated habits we are falling into, eh, Joyce, my dear? What would the good people of St. Inigoes say if they knew of it?" inquired Mr. Jubal Wells, as he arose from the table.

All the company, having finished their breakfast, followed his example.

Miss Lisburne passed into the drawing-room to receive her visitor.

Mr. Daw had brought a bouquet of rare exotics, which he begged Miss Lisburne would honor him by

accepting. He had also a box at the theatre for that evening, which he wished to place at the disposal of Mrs. Wells and the young ladies.

Miss Lisburne gratefully accepted the bouquet, but politely referred him to the elder lady in regard to the box.

As Mr. and Mrs. Wells entered the room the young gentleman saluted them, and renewed the offer of his box, adding that the play was to be Shakespeare's comedy of "The Taming of the Shrew," brought out by the greatest comedians of the age, the world-renowned Jefferson family.

The old gentleman and lady looked at each other, at first inquiringly, then approvingly, and, finally, the gay and happy septuagenarians thanked the donor and gladly accepted the box.

Other members of the family now came in, and among them Mrs. Roslyn, to whom Mr. Wells formally presented Mr. John Daw.

And soon after this the visitor made his bow and withdrew.

Every one liked him, and as soon as he was gone every one was eloquent in his praise.

That evening the whole family went to the Washington Theatre to witness the performance of the "Taming of the Shrew," by the talented family of comedians whose descendants are, even to this day, famous in their profession.

Mr. John Daw did not occupy a seat in his own box, but from his obscure post—a back seat in the circle, opposite—he watched every movement and expression of Miss Lisburne, and between the acts went over to pay his respects to her party.

This was only the beginning of the many attentions he

lavished on Miss Lisburne, Mrs. Roslyn, and all their guests at the house.

When these attentions had been rendered for several weeks, an unpleasant event occurred—a visit from Lord John Daw.

One blustering day in March, when the wind had been blowing for thirty-six hours, and had dried up all the mud on the avenue, and was raising it in suffocating clouds above ground, Lord John's carriage drew up under the Lombardy poplar before Shadow Hall, and he alighted and sent in his card to Mrs. Roslyn, with the request that she would see him alone on business for a few moments.

This card was brought to the widow as she sat with her lady friends in the back parlor, engaged in her favorite pastime of working lace.

"On business!" faltered Zora, turning pale as death, as she remembered the five quarters' rent that was due and her utter inability to pay it.

She excused herself to her friends, and passed trembling to the front parlor, where she found Lord John, in his black coat, knee breeches, and silk hose, trotting up and down the floor like a great, mad crow.

"Good morning, Lord John. You wish to see me on business? Pray, take this," she said, in as calm a tone as she could command, rolling the easiest chair in the room up to the fireplace for his use.

"Good morning!" growled the old man, dropping into the offered seat. Then turning firecely upon her he demanded:

"Where is Jack?"

"I—beg pardon?" inquired the lady, in some perplexity, as she stood on the rug near him.

"My son, Mr. John Daw, mum! I ask you where he is? That is plain English."

"Really, Lord John," said Zora Roslyn, forgetting all fears of her landlord in her indignation at his rudeness, and coolly seating herself in a small arm-chair at the opposite corner of the chimney, "I am not your son's warden."

"I don't know that, mum! I don't know that! Hark ye, Mrs. Roslyn! That boy of mine has been dangling after your girl for the last six weeks! *I* know all about it!—but I did not think he was so besotted as to want to marry her!"

Zora Roslyn was too deeply indignant to speak; she would not have condescended to notice that insolent speech even by a rebuke; if it had been to have saved the speaker's soul! She sat with folded hands, quietly regarding him.

CHAPTER III

LORD AND LADY

"And I won't have it, I tell you, mum! I won't have it!" he continued in a heat.

"You seem to have lost your self-control, Lord John. I beg that you will try to regain it," replied Mrs. Roslyn.

"Hark ye, Mistress Roslyn! That young dog of mine came to me yesterday morning, and said he had won the affections—pah! he made me sick!—of Miss—Miss—What's-her-name! You niece, and asked me—the impertinent jack-a-napes—for my sanction to the engagement. No matter what I said to him in reply—it was to

the point, you may depend upon that. He walked out of the room. I thought he had gone into the garden to smoke. But he has not been near the house since."

"I am not surprised at that," coolly remarked Mrs. Roslyn.

"And now, mum, *where is he?*"

"Really, Lord John, you had better get the public bellman to ring for the missing young gentleman, for I cannot give you the least help in finding him," said Zora, calmly.

"Look ye, mum! I don't know where the young dog is skulking; but I do know that he will turn up here before long. And I won't have it, I say! I won't have it; do you understand?"

Mrs. Roslyn vouchsafed no reply.

"I will not permit this marriage! I will not permit it! Why the deuce don't you answer me, mum?"

"Really, my lord, I do not see what either you or I have to do with this affair, which concerns the young people alone," replied Zora Roslyn.

Old John Daw gasped for breath, fell back in his chair and glared at her. Such treason! such heterodoxy! such—such—such *blasphemy* he had never heard in all his life before. Was *this,* then, what republics were bringing people to?

He pulled his handkerchief from his pocket and wiped his silvery bullet-head. He jumped from his chair again and trotted up and down the floor.

Suddenly he returned and confronted Zora Roslyn, who was sitting with her hands folded on her lap, serenely enjoying his discomfiture.

"You ask me what this most disgraceful marriage is to you or me, mum! You ask me this, I think."

"Yes."

"It is everything that is disgusting to me, mum! I am the young man's father, mum!"

"I presume so."

"And he is my son!"

"As a consequence."

"And I will not permit him to marry a girl of low birth."

Zora Roslyn deigned no reply to this insolence.

"I will go to the church, if necessary, and forbid the bans," he answered, hotly.

"You would not have the chance, Lord John. Bans are never published in this city. People have not time for anything like that."

"No bans! No law! No order! everything going to perdition! Then I'll forbid the marriage. At the very altar!" fumed the old man.

"You will make a useless as well as an unseemly disturbance, Lord John. Pray compose yourself and listen to me. This is Washington City and not London. You have not the least power to prevent your son from marrying whom he pleases."

"By George! the deuce I have not!" exclaimed the old man, gasping and growing red.

"You have not, really. You must know that as well as I do."

He did know it, though he had forgotten, or chosen to ignore the fact.

"Well, mum," he said, "though I may not have the power to restrain my graceless son—for he is of age—set fire to him!—you certainly have the control of your niece, who is a minor. And I trust you are too honorable a woman to allow her to force herself into a noble family who would be degraded by the union."

"Lord John," replied Mrs. Roslyn, controlling her

temper, and speaking very calmly, "I am quite as unwilling for my niece to marry Mr. Daw as you could be for your son to marry Miss Lisburne for, to be candid, you would be a very undesirable family connection; but——"

"Humph! humph! humph! There! We are complimenting each other, it seems."

"I beg your pardon if my necessary frankness has given offense," said the lady.

"Oh, not at all!—not at all! And since these are your sentiments, I hope, mum, that you will unite with me in trying to prevent the scandal of this marriage. You can do so by using your authority over your niece."

"Excuse me, Lord John, I was about to explain, when you interrupted me, that I have no such authority over my niece, and have no more power to hinder this marriage than you have. Any marriageable girl in this district is free to marry without her guardian's consent," said Mrs. Roslyn, quietly.

"To the foul fiend with all republics, I say! All ancient, venerable barriers in domestic and social and national life—everything is going to ruin—and the sooner it gets there the better, I say! Come, Mistress Roslyn, though we have no authority in this matter, we must do our best to bring these young rebels to reason, you know."

"I shall do nothing whatever, Lord John."

"What, what, what, what!"

"I shall not interfere."

"Why, you said—you said—you said that you were as much opposed to the match as myself."

"And so I am, for—pardon me for repeating it—I should consider you extremely objectionable as a rela-

tion; but the affair is really no business of ours; we are not the pair to be married."

"Lord bless my soul. No, of course not. What the deuce does this widow mean? Is the woman going to propose to me?" gasped the old man under his breath. Then, recovering himself with an effort, he said:

"Think of it, mum. Think what must happen, unless you do interfere. Think what a scandal a runaway marriage would be."

"There shall be no such event as that, Lord John, I give you my word."

"Ah, I thought you would come to your reason!"

"Understand me: I will *not* interfere either to advance or retard my niece's marriage; but if she should accept Mr. Daw I certainly will not drive them to the expedient of an elopement. They shall be properly married from my house."

"Lord have mercy on me! Whatever tempted me to come to this demon-driven country!" gasped the Briton, parading up and down the room in a great heat.

At that moment there was a knock at the front door, followed quickly by the entrance of Gad, showing in a tall, thin, dark man of about fifty years of age—Mr. Richard Daly, Lord John Daw's land agent.

"Ah, Richard, is it you! Has Mr. Daw got home?" inquired the old man.

"No, my lord!"

"Then what the deuce brings you here?"

"If you please, my lord, I have been looking for your lordship for the last two hours, and seeing your lordship's carriage before this door I took the liberty to come in."

"What do you want of me?"

"If you please, my lord, Brown of the Indian Queen

Tavern, has sent a messenger to the house to say that Mr. Daw is lying extremely ill there, and he begs that you will come to him at once."

"Lord bless my soul! What is the matter with the poor, dear lad?"

"I don't know, my lord, but the man said he was out of his head."

"Lord bless me, I'll go at once! I'll—I'll call and take Dr. Hamilton along with me! Bless my soul! Bless my soul! Bless my soul! Good-morning, Mrs. Roslyn."

"Good-morning, Lord John. I hope Mr. Daw will get better. I presume it is only the ague; there is so much of it about the city," said Zora, kindly. But Lord John Daw had trotted off.

"And now I *have* done it!" exclaimed the lady, dropping back into her chair in a state between laughing and crying. "Now he won't spare me another day! He'll put an execution in the house before twenty-four hours is over my head, as sure as fate! Well, 'if the worst comes to the worst,' I think Aunt and Uncle Wells will give me and Nea house-room in the country until we can turn around."

So saying, she went back to her guests in the dining-room.

If Zora Roslyn could have heard the first words uttered by Lord John to his agent, her suspicions would have been confirmed.

Richard Daly had preceded his lordship to the sidewalk, and when the footman opened the door the agent politely assisted the old man to enter the carriage.

"Tell the coachman to go to Dr. Hamilton's office and then get in here, Richard; I want to talk to you

about that defaulting tenant of mine," said Lord John, as soon as he was seated comfortably among his cushions.

Richard Daly obeyed orders, and then his principal abruptly inquired:

"How much rent does that woman, the widow Roslyn owe?"

"She is nearly two years behindhand, sir; but I could not tell your lordship exactly without referring to the books."

"And how the deuce, sir, is it that you let a tenant get so far into arrears as that? *You* are a reliable agent," burst out the irritable old man.

"If your lordship please to recall the fact, you instructed me not to press that account until further orders," respectfully answered the agent.

"You have them now, then. Demand payment at once. If it is not rendered put in an execution."

"Yes, my lord."

"That woman is quite capable of reducing Mr. John Daw to work in the brick-yards, confound her! I wish I could bring *her* down to pick oakum in the penitentiary!" he grunted *sotto voce*.

As the carriage now stopped before the doctor's office the old man said no more, but with the assistance of Richard Daly he got out.

He was fortunate in finding the doctor in, and he forthwith stated the case and carried him off to his carriage, which was turned and driven rapidly up to the Capitol Hill and down Pennsylvania Avenue to the Indian Queen Tavern, which then stood on the site now occupied by the Metropolitan Hotel.

They found Mr. John Daw in bed in an upper chamber, watched by a waiter.

He was in high fever, with low muttering delirium, and the burden of his monologue was always—

"Love still love!"

or "Eldiva! Eldiva!" which on his lips meant the same thing.

His malady proved to be a severe attack of malarial fever, which then prevailed in some portions of Washington at all seasons of the year. His illness was neither caused nor aggravated by his father's opposition to his contemplated marriage—in fact, had nothing whatever to do with it, or with anything else but the miasma of which the new city was so full, and if, in his delirium, he raved of his lady, it was because she had been in his mind at the time of his attack.

Yet Lord John Daw was convinced that his own despotic cruelty in crossing "Jack's" passion had driven that only and beloved son into a brain fever, and upon the brink of the grave.

He was too proud a man to mention these misgivings to the attending physician, who might have set him right on the subject; but he was so full of remorse and terror that he privately recorded an oath in Heaven that if the Lord would spare his boy's life he would mortify his own pride and permit him to marry whom he pleased—especially since he had learned that he had no power to prevent him from doing so.

Seeing Richard Daly about to leave the room, he recalled him.

"Where are you off to, in such a hurry? You might be wanted here."

"If you please, my lord, I am going to put an execution into Shadow Hill, according to your lordship's instructions," respectfully answered the agent.

"You are, are you?" burst forth the eccentric old man, in a voice much too strong for a sick-room. Then remembering himself, he lowered his tone, and continued, with suppressed indignation:

"You shall do nothing of the sort—fire you!—nothing of the sort! She is a widow, sir! And the Word of the Lord is heavy on the oppressor of the widow! Let her alone, unless you wish to leave my employment. And, see here! Go to the Hall, and send my housekeeper, Mrs. Stacks, here. Tell her to pack a valise for me, for I shall stay here. Take the carriage and fetch her. Mr. Daw is too ill to be moved, and I cannot leave him to these people!"

The agent was too well used to these eccentricities of the "crazy lord," as the old Briton was often called, to be in the least disturbed by his sudden change of purpose toward Mrs. Roslyn.

Lord John Daw engaged a room next his son's chamber; and he took all the doctor's directions, and seated himself by the bed to see that they were punctually followed.

On the arrival of Mrs. Stacks, a tall, spare, black-eyed, very wide-awake woman of forty, he installed her in his place, arranged for his carriage, horses and servants to remain at the hotel until further orders; and then he went to dinner in the public dining-room.

That night he sat late by his sick boy, listening to his ravings.

"What do you think of him, Stacks?" he inquired of his tall housekeeper.

"I think, my lord, as Mr. John is as ill as ill can be to live. And I think," added the woman, who had surreptitiously heard the "row" between the father and son on the subject of that obnoxious mar-

riage, and who, being of a sentimental turn, had sympathized with the lovers—"I think, by the way he talks, as he has been crossed in love, as well."

"Humph! humph! humph! Lord bless my soul! How these boys torment one, to be sure! Poor fellow! Poor fellow! Do you think he will get over it, Stacks?" anxiously inquired the father.

"I hope so, my lord, I hope so. And I think if he could have his way it might be all the better for him. See, my lord, he is sleeping quietly enough now. He'll be likely to sleep this way till morning. If I might be so bold, my lord, I would advise your lordship to go and lie down and try to get some rest."

"I will, Stacks; but if there should be the least change in him you must come and wake me up. Be sure to do so, Stacks."

"I will indeed, my lord. Your lordship may trust me."

The old man went into the next room, and, with the assistance of his valet, who was awaiting him there, he undressed and went to bed, and after a long time to sleep.

He was not disturbed by any message from the patient. The place was so quiet that he slept late. When he awakened he arose at once, and without waiting to ring for his valet, he drew on his dressing-gown, thrust his feet in slippers, and stole on tiptoe into the sick room.

"How is he?" he whispered, hoarsely, approaching the bed; but his own eyes answered him. His son was lying there, no longer asleep, or flushed with fever, or muttering with delirium, but awake, pale and conscious.

"He is much better this morning, my lord; his pulse is much lower, and——"

"I see. I see. I thank Heaven," breathed the old man, cutting short the housekeeper's words. Then bending over his son, he asked:

"Jack, my dear boy, how do you feel this morning?"

"A—little—faint. Slightly sick and dizzy, sir—that is all," answered the young man, in a feeble voice.

"Stacks, leave us for a few moments," said Lord John, sinking into the chair that the housekeeper had vacated for him at the head of the bed.

"Yes, my lord; and I will get some nourishment ready for Mr. John while I am away," said the woman, leaving the room.

"Jack, lad, you feel better—a great deal better—than you did last night, don't you?"

"I don't know. I don't remember. I think I had a bad ague yesterday. I—I am only weak and—giddy now," feebly replied the young man.

"Jack, my boy, I want to tell you something before Stacks returns. Can you listen to me, Jack?"

"Yes," breathed the young man.

"Well, then, Jack, my lad, I withdraw my opposition to your marriage with Miss Lisburne. You may marry the young lady as soon as you like, Jack."

"God bless you, dear father!" said John Daw, as his heavy eyes and pale face lighted up with new life, and he reached out his arm and clasped the old man's hand fondly.

"Yes, yes, you shall, indeed, marry her just as soon as ever you like. After all, her father *was* a gentleman, though a poor one, eh, Jack?"

"Yes," faintly responded the young man.

"And for the matter of that, a wife always takes rank from her husband, you know, Jack."

"Yes."

"And rises with him, you know, Jack."

"Yes."

"And now I ask, my dear boy, won't you try to get well as fast as ever you can, for my sake?"

"Yes."

"That is right."

But John Daw did not get well very fast. His fever rose again in the afternoon, and delirium set in in the evening.

And so the fever ran on for fourteen days before it would be broken, and then there was another fourteen days before the patient was able to leave the hotel.

It was on the first of April that John Daw, armed with his father's sanction to his suit, paid his first visit to Shadow Hall.

"All Fools' day is a very fitting one for that errand—very fitting, very fitting!" Lord John Daw had growled to himself; for, with his son's recovery to health, he could not see any particular reason for the *mésalliance*, though, being a man of honor, he could not now oppose it.

Mr. Daw asked first to see Mrs. Roslyn, who came in answer to his request, holding out both hands to welcome him.

The young gentleman presented his father's letter to Mrs. Roslyn, in which the old lord apologized to the lady for the words he had spoken on the occasion of his former visit, withdrew his opposition to the marriage then in question, and solicited the hand of her niece, Miss Lisburne, for his son, Mr. John Daw.

Zora Roslyn read the letter to the end, and then laughed merrily as she looked up at the waiting lover, who sat before her pale from recent illness.

"I must answer you, Mr. Daw, as I answered your

father," she said, "by telling you that I really cannot see what I have to do with this—or he either, for that matter! It is an affair of yours and Eldiva's. She is in the garden, watching Old Biggs set out hyacinth and tulip bulbs. Go find her there, young gentleman."

Mr. John Daw seized the lady's hand and darted out of the house into the garden after his sweetheart.

That day the engagement was announced to the guests who were staying at the house.

A week later—at the earnest solicitation of the bridegroom-elect, and for the accommodation of visitors who wished to remain to the wedding, but were obliged to return home by a certain time—an early day was fixed for the wedding—the first of May.

Zora Roslyn sacrificed her set of diamonds to obtain money for the wedding expenses, and she also pushed her credit as far as it would go, so that the orphan girl might have a good wedding outfit.

The relatives who were staying at the house were also very generous, and made the bride-elect many presents—dress-patterns of India muslin, China crape, English chintz and French cambric—goods of that time.

Miss Grinnell, the fashionable dressmaker, was engaged. The women in the house took needles and thread and put on thimbles to assist in making up the wedding clothes.

It was arranged that the marriage ceremony should be performed in the Protestant Church at the Navy Yard, which was the one attended by the Roslyn family. Avonia Sothoron and Imperia North were to be bridesmaids—it was also understood that Captain Yorke and Lieutenant North were to officiate as groomsmen, and Mr. Wells was to give away the bride. After the ceremony at the church there was to be a reception and ball

at the house, but at an early hour the bride and groom were to set out on their tour through the North.

They were to be escorted by their bridesmaids and groomsmen on the first short stage of their journey which would bring them the same night to the Wolf's Head Tavern.

On the morning of the wedding-day, while all the members of the household were busy at their individual affairs, little Nea stole down stairs and made her way to the flower garden, which she entered with great delight.

She felt the warmth of the morning sun; she breathed the freshness of the dewy air; she inhaled the fragrance of blossom and flower; she heard the music of bird and bee. Yes! and in her mind's eye she saw the beauties of form and color as she had seen them in the spring four years ago, before that terrible fever which had nearly cost her her life had really darkened her eyes through palsy of the optic nerve.

"I know where to find the moss-roses, and I think I could almost see them," murmured Nea to herself, as with her hands stretched out before her she glided slowly along the grass-grown walks between borders of wall-flowers, sweet williams, larkspurs, ragged robins, and other old-fashioned garden flowers, toward the arch where the moss-roses grew.

There they were! a group of white and red moss-roses growing on each side of the honeysuckle arch that spanned the walk.

"I know the white from the red, too, by their smell. The white are the sweetest," she said, as she put forth her hands, gently, caressingly, and felt for the buds and drew them toward her face.

"These are red," she murmured, let them go and swing back to their parent stalks. "And these are

white," she said, drawing others toward her, and trying to break off the twigs at the joints, so as not to injure the rose bush.

At this moment she heard a sound of footsteps coming quickly down the walk, and an eager voice calling:

"Nea, Nea!"

The child started and sprang around with a gasp of joy, and in quick, spasmodic catches of her breath, cried out:

"Oh, Lance, Lance, Lance, Lance!" and then lost her voice in delight, and held out her arms eagerly to the youth who was hastening toward her.

Lancelot Roslyn was now a handsome young fellow of seventeen, well grown for his years, with a fresh complexion, dark gray eyes, and black hair. He wore a midshipman's uniform.

He caught the child up in his arms, and hugged and kissed her before he spoke again.

She was panting in ecstasy.

"Are you so glad to see me, Nea?" he asked, using the common phrase, although he knew she could not see him except in her "mind's eye."

"Oh, Lance! So glad! So glad!" she gasped for joy.

"And you did not expect to see me so soon, did you, Nea?"

"No—not till next month. But, oh! so glad! So glad!"

"Are you, Nea? *Can* you see me a little? How are the eyes, Nea?" he inquired, gazing into the soft, bright, brown orbs that were turned toward his *voice*.

The pathetic little face fell into a momentary sadness, and she did not reply at once.

"How are the eyes, Nea?" he inquired again.

"They are well, only they don't see—much. I can't *see* you, Lance, but I can *feel* you," she said, passing her hands over his face, and then suddenly throwing her arms around his neck and kissing him in delight.

"Were you here all alone, Nea?"

"Yes. Oh, Lance! So glad! So glad you've come home!"

"Are you, Nea? Who let you come out here alone?"

"Nobody let me—I came of myself. Oh, Lance! So glad!"

"Why did you come here by yourself, Nea?"

"Oh, to get white moss rosebuds for Eldiva's nosegay. How did you know I was here, Lance?"

"I saw you as I came through the alley. I came that way because I couldn't make any one hear me at the front door. Where are they all?"

"The servants, you mean?"

"Yes."

"Oh, Gad, who tends the door, is in the stable, cleaning off the carriage and currying the horse; Liza is waiting on the ladies up-stairs; and Aunt Apple is getting breakfast, and Uncle Biggs is doing everything else in the world. And he says he is run off his feet and out of his senses. And so I wanted to help him; and I came out here to gather white moss-rosebuds to make a nosegay that he had promised to get for Eldiva."

"Ah! but how is it that there is so much more to do now than there used to be? Is the house full of company?"

"Oh, yes; quite full. And, besides—oh! what *do* you think, Lance?" exclaimed the child, making up a little face full of mystery and importance.

"What, Nea?"

"Guess."

"I never could."

"Well, then, Eldiva is going to be married this very day."

"Eldiva!—going to be married!" exclaimed the youth, losing his breath in astonishment.

"Yes indeed—this very day!"

"And who is the happy man?"

"What happy man?"

"The fellow she is going to marry."

"Oh! Mr. John Daw."

"Any kin to the old lord?"

"Yes; his son."

"Poor Diva! I don't envy her her father-in-law."

"That is what everybody says. And, oh, Lance, I did try my best to persuade her not to take Mr. John Daw—to wait for you, and marry you. But, lor! she wouldn't take my advice."

"Thank you for thinking of me, little Nea. So Eldiva is to be married this morning, eh?"

"Oh, yes; that reminds me I must get my nosegay ready. And oh, Lance, if you have got a penknife in your pocket, please cut some white moss rosebuds for me."

"All right," said the youth, standing the child upon her feet, and drawing a clasp-knife from his pocket.

"Will these do, Nea?"

She passed both hands lightly over the rosebuds and exclaimed:

"Oh, yes; they are lovely. They feel so fresh, and smell so sweet."

"Come along, then; let us go into the house," he said, as he lifted the child in his arms and carried her away out of the pleasant garden, away from the singing birds, and humming bees, and perfume-breathing flowers, into

the kitchen, where they found Old Biggs, still in his shirt-sleeves, busy making the coffee—a feat in which he so much excelled the cook that he was always burdened with that duty in addition to all others.

As Lance entered, with Nea seated on his right shoulder, and the bunch of white rosebuds in his left hand, Old Biggs stared until he recognized Lance, and then nearly dropped the coffeepot in his astonishment.

"Lor' bress my po' ole brack soul, Marse Lance! Is dat you? To come on a po' ole body in that way, like a t'ief in de night! Yer made a cole faintness run down my back," said the old man, as he sat down on one of the wooden chairs to recover himself.

"Ain't you glad to see me, Uncle Biggs?" laughed the young man, laying down his moss roses on a chair that he might offer his hand to the old fellow.

"Glad ain't no word for it, Marse Lance! I's ober-j'yed—I is!" cried Old Biggs, seizing and pressing the youth's hand between his own. "Why, it was only dis 'dentical mornin', wot ebber was, as I was a sayin' to Miss Nea how I wish Marse Lance was home. 'Talk ob de debbil an' his imps do appear.' It's de trufe, indeed! But I's mighty proud to see you, Marse Lance—I is dat!"

"Thank you, Uncle Biggs, both for your hearty welcome and the compliment implied in your quotation," laughed the youth. "Where is Aunt Apple?"

"Oh, she's gone to de hen-house arter fresh eggs for de quality's breakfus. Now 'scuse me, Marse, I got to 'tend to de quality's breakfus."

Old Biggs made the coffee, and then taking up the coffeepot in one hand and a plate of waffles in the other, he disappeared through a door on the north of the fire-

place leading into a little pantry and thence into the dining-room.

"Tell me if these are right, Lance?" the child Nea inquired, as she held up the white moss-rosebuds which she had arranged into a lovely bouquet.

"Yes, you wonderful little fairy—perfect! Why, Nea, you must have sight at the tips of your little fingers!" exclaimed the youth.

The child laughed her rare, sweet laugh, and said:

"Now get me a glass of water, and I will set them by Eldiva's plate, so that she can see them when she comes down to breakfast."

The young midshipman complied with her request, and Nea, carrying the glass with the flowers in one hand, felt her way with the other toward the door leading into the pantry and through that into the dining-room. Lance followed her. He *had* felt as if he had been away from home for a century, yet when he looked around him it seemed as if he had not been absent for a day.

Feeling her way around the edge of the table, Nea found Eldiva's usual place and put the glass containing the bouquet next her plate.

Old Biggs began to ring the iron bell with all his might, and before the clangor ceased the family and guests began to file into the room through the doors communicating with the drawing-room in front.

And *then* there was astonishment and uproar!

They crowded around the young midshipman, all voices mingling in wild delight of welcome. All hands were extended at once, and nothing heard but—

"Lance!"

"Lance!"

"Lance!"

"When did you get here!"

"God bless you, boy!"

"Oh, what a joyful surprise this is!"

Zora Roslyn caught him away from all the rest and hugged and kissed him, with tears and smiles as hearty and sincere as if she had been his own mother instead of his step-dame.

It was full ten minutes before the tumult was all over, and Lance had explained to all questioners the favoring accidents of wind and weather that had sent him home sooner than he was expected.

Then they sat down to breakfast, Lance taking Nea's place and lifting the child upon his lap.

It was a large party that gathered around that table, for besides Zora Roslyn, her child, her niece and her step-son, there were Mr. and Mrs. Wells, Mr. Neil Carnes, Miss Sothoron, Mr. Verne, Miss North, and Miss Grinnell.

After enjoying the attractive and appetizing repast the company arose and separated to their several rooms to dress for the wedding ceremony.

CHAPTER IV

THE WEDDING

The large front chamber on the right or south side of the Wells' apartment had been given up as a dressing-room to Eldiva and her bridesmaids, and here they assembled after breakfast.

Liza, the bright mulatto maid, had already made the

two beds, and on their snow-white marseilles counterpanes were laid the new finery.

On one was displayed the bridal dress, a costly gown of rich white Canton crape embroidered in white silk, a fine Brusselles lace veil, long white kid gloves, and white kid boots—the whole presented by old Mr. Wells. There was an ivory fan, the gift of Mrs. Wells; a set of pearls, the offering of the bridegroom elect, and a crown of orange flowers from Avonia Sothoron.

On the other bed lay a variety of dresses of soft bright colors—Canton crêpes in rose, azure and canary, white brocades embroidered in flowers in their natural hues, brilliant India silk and English chintzes.

Liza stood by this bed carefully folding these dresses and laying them in an open trunk that stood at the foot.

Eldiva, the bride-elect, sat before a white-draped toilet-table that stood between the two white-curtained front windows. The tall toilet glass reflected a very pale face. She had been grave and silent all the morning. She had scarcely greeted her old playmate Lance, when she had met him so unexpectedly in the breakfast room. She had not noticed by any word of acknowledgment the beautiful bouquet of white moss rosebuds that little blind Nea had placed beside her plate. She had merely picked it up in an absent-minded manner, and brought it to her room.

Avonia, who stood at the back of her chair, arranging her hair, suddenly interrupted:

"What is the matter with you, Diva? You are as glum as a mud-turtle with its head drawn in. Now, who has walked over your feelings this morning?"

"No one, Ava; every one is as kind to me as possible—much kinder than they need be," replied the girl.

"Then, what on earth ails you? Something does, that is evident."

"I *am* depressed, *awfully* depressed."

"What about?"

"I do not know, unless——"

"Unless what?"

"I do not like to say—unless it was a dream I had," murmured the girl, in a half-audible tone.

"A dream!" exclaimed Avonia, dropping her hair-brush.

"A dream!" cried Imperia, leaving her task of tacking flowers upon the wedding-dress, and coming forward.

"Dream!" muttered Liza, laying down the robe she had been folding and creeping up behind.

For remarkable dreams and every form of the supernatural had an unacknowledged fascination for these young creatures, ladies as well as maid.

"Yes, a dream," sighed the bride-elect, "and one really should not mind dreams, you know."

"But what was it?" inquired Avonia.

"I don't like to speak of it! I don't like to think of it!" shuddered Eldiva.

"If you will only tell us, you will get it off your mind," said Avonia, diplomatically.

And after some persuasion, seeing that her companions would not rest until their curiosity was satisfied, Eldiva told her dream.

"I dreamed that I was lying wide awake, but with my eyes closed to rest them, when there came slowly and softly upon my perceptions the consciousness of some unearthly presence approaching me, and then that the presence was that of a woman. I heard the low trailing of her robe as she glided toward me; I heard her low breathing; then I saw the shadowy form of a beautiful,

pale woman, with mournful dark eyes, and a veil of long, black hair that swept down upon a red robe that draped her form and glowed like a dull fire. While I seemed so spell-bound as to be incapable of speech or motion, she stooped over me and whispered:

" '*Eldiva!*'

"I could not answer—I could scarcely breathe—while she shade continued:

" 'Goddess of Eld! you are here again to repeat the oft-enacted tragedy! Old goddess, you were warned, but you would not take the warning. You would not, for you were doomed to work out the expiation of the old sin.

'Errors many, sorrows rife,
Once a bride, never a wife.'

"With these words, the dread shade lifted itself like a cloud and disappeared in the darkness. I breathed freely again, but I slept no more last night.

"There!" exclaimed Eldiva, with a brighter look, as if in the telling of her dream she had really got the nightmare off her mind. "That was all. I might account for that dream, for, as I said, I do not believe in the supernatural, and I really do think that loss of sleep has had more to do with my low spirits this morning than anything else. Go on with my hair, Ava."

But a gravity had fallen upon them that they could not throw off. They seemed even too heavily oppressed to make any comments on the weird adventure of the bride-elect.

Avonia solemnly resumed her hair-dressing.

Imperia gravely returned to her graceful task of tucking sprigs of orange flowers about the draperies of the wedding-dress.

Liza, solemnly shaking her head, went back to her packing.

Avonia was the first to break the silence, but she talked without stopping work.

"I have heard that prophetic couplet before to-day, Eldiva," she whispered, as she twisted the girl's dark hair into glossy ropes and wound them into a rich knot at the nape of the neck.

"Yes, of course you have, and so have I, often. You know I told you that I thought I could account for my dream, and I meant that it was made up by my memory of that couplet and of the red-robed woman's ghost that is said to haunt the house."

"Oh, I see!"

"*I* never heard that couplet before. What about it?" inquired Imperia North, turning her head without stopping her work.

"Give me my white kid gaiters, now, Ava, and I will tell her while I put them on," said the bride-elect.

Avonia, who had finished the hair-dressing, went and brought the white boots, and Eldiva began her tale of old times.

"I do not think," she said, "that there is a family in the world who has so ancient a legend as my mother's had, which was said to have been of Roman origin."

"Everybody can see the Italian blood in you, now, Eldiva," said Imperia.

"Perhaps! Well, it has been handed down by tradition that in the days of old pagan Rome, a daughter of our house was a priestess of Vesta, who broke her vows and ran away with a young Roman soldier; but before they could be married she was pursued, captured, and burned alive in expiation of her sacrilege. The old

couplet is said to have been first written of her in the Latin tongue."

"But there was a more modern ancestress of yours who came to grief on her wedding day to whom the couplet was applied," said Avonia.

"Not an *ancestress,* my dear! Don't you see that the woman to whom that prophecy referred, or in whom it was fulfilled, could never have been an ancestress—

'Once a bride, but never a wife,—

don't you see?"

"Oh, yes! but if not an ancestress, who then was she?"

"Another daughter of our house, whose name I bear, and whose portrait, still in existence, I am said closely to resemble. She lived a hundred years ago, and on her wedding day there came up a fearful thunder storm and the bridegroom was struck dead by lightning at the side of his bride as they were leaving the altar. She never got over the shock, though she lived to a great age, and devoted her life to learning and to good works. In her latter days—partly from the awe she everywhere inspired and partly from her name—Eldiva—she was called 'The Old Goddess.' Now you can see, dear girls, how the memory of this old legend, connecting with the impression of this silly story of the red-robed woman, must have influenced my imagination and governed my dream. Come! I feel better now!" concluded Eldiva.

Active fingers had been busy during this short recital, and now Imperia brought the decorated wedding-dress for the bride to put on.

Half an hour later the whole party were ready; the bride in her rich and elegant dress of white embroidered Canton crêpe, Brusselles lace veil, pearls and orange

flowers; the bridesmaids in their white India muslin robes, tulle veils and white roses.

The last glove was scarcely buttoned, however, before Mrs. Roslyn knocked at the door and then came in.

Zora had dropped her widow's weeds for the occasion, and now appeared in a silver-gray silk suit, with hat and feathers, gloves and veil to match.

Mutual compliments were paid to each other's toilets, and then the elderly lady said if they were ready they had better go down, as the carriages had been waiting for ten minutes.

A drive of fifteen minutes brought them to the church, where a large crowd of people were assembled.

The bride's procession formed in the vestibule, entered by the middle door, and went up the middle aisle.

Mrs. Roslyn and Mr. Carnes led the way. The two bridesmaids followed together. Old Mr. Well, with the bride on his arm, brought up the rear. Lance Roslyn, leading little Nea, followed at a distance.

When the little procession reached the altar the bridegroom and his party, who were grouped on the right, immediately came forward.

The rector, the Rev. Mr. Allan, opened the prayer-book and commenced the marriage ceremony after the ritual of the Protestant Episcopal Church.

The imposing ceremony went on to its conclusion, and the newly married pair received the congratulations of their friends, and then went into the vestry to sign the register.

When this form had been complied with, the party left the church and re-entered the carriages.

On the arrival of the wedding party at Shadow Hall, the bride and bridesmaids immediately retired to change their dress for dinner.

The bride's dinner dress was a light blue brocade, with white embroidered lilies, a lily in her dark hair, and one on her bosom, and a pair of solitaire diamond ear-rings, the gift of Lord John Daw.

The first bridesmaid, Imperia North, wore a rose-colored China crêpe, and the second one, pale green Irish gauze.

These were all the fashionable dress fabrics of the day.

The dinner-party assembled in the front drawing-room. The table was laid in the large, front dining-room to the right.

The two old gentlemen who were most interested in the feast, Lord John Daw and Mr. Jubal Wells, had scarcely time to become impatient, when Old Biggs opened the communicating door and announced dinner.

After dinner the ladies all left the gentlemen to their wine, and retired to change their dress once more—for the ball of the evening.

The bride and her bridesmaids resumed the white robes and white flowers they had worn at the wedding ceremony, but the bride did not wear her veil.

When ready, they went down into the drawing-room, which was ablaze with the light of many wax candles.

The large dining-room on the right had been cleared for the dancers. The floor had been waxed and chalked, and the whole brilliantly illuminated.

And now was heard the negro band of musicians tuning their instruments as they were seated on a temporary elevated platform at the further extremity of the room.

The company began to arrive at an hour which, in this age, would be considered preposterously early, and by eight o'clock all the rooms were filled.

The bride and groom, standing with their attendants near the door of the front drawing-room, had received the congratulations of every group of visitors, before the latter passed into the ballroom.

The ball was to be opened by them at eight o'clock.

When that hour struck, the wedding party proceeded to the ballroom, and the wedding march was played.

There was first a promenade and after that a quadrille, in which the bride, groom, bridesmaids and groomsmen formed a set together.

When this was finished, and ladies were resting and gentlemen fanning them, or bringing glasses of water, the bridal set slipped out, one by one, so as not to be observed, and went upstairs to prepare for their journey.

Eldiva's trunks were packed up and were to be sent on to Baltimore by the next morning's stage-coach.

A small portmanteau, filled with requisites for her journey, was all that she meant to encumber herself with in her carriage. Her travelling dress was a simple silver-gray poplin, with hat, feather, veil and gloves to match. Her bridesmaids wore gray merino.

They all dressed in the same large front chamber before mentioned.

They were soon ready, but before they went downstairs, they held a little parting reception there of ten minutes' duration.

Mr. and Mrs. Wells and Mrs. Roslyn came in to say good-by.

"You two girls and your escorts will be back to-night, I suppose?" said Mrs. Wells, addressing the bridesmaids and referring to the groomsmen.

"Oh, yes, to be sure! We only go with the 'happy pair' as a 'guard of honor' so far as the Wolf's Head,

which is the first stage of their journey, and where they will put up until morning. And when we have seen them safely housed we will return. It will be very late, however," said Imperia North, as she drew on her gray gloves.

While this conversation was going on, Zora Roslyn drew the bride a little way off, and after fondly kissing and blessing her, said:

"Come now, Eldiva, come into my room and kiss little Nea good-by. She has gone to bed two hours ago, but you can kiss her in her sleep."

And the lady drew her niece into the adjoining room, and thence down three broad steps into the back chamber occupied by herself and her little daughter.

Nea was fast asleep on the great four-post bedstead.

Eldiva stooped and kissed her softly, whispering:

"Good-by, my darling! God bless you, my sweet, sweet darling."

Nea awoke to half-consciousness, put her arms around her cousin's neck, and held her fast, muttering with faltering tongue and fast-closed eyes:

"Don't—don't go, Diva! Oh, Diva, don't, don't go!"

Eldiva gently unclasped the clinging arms, kissed her softly again, and turned away.

Were the sleeping child's words accidental, or were they previsionary? she asked herself, with a superstitious shiver, as she remembered her warning dream.

She followed her aunt back to the room where she had left her companions.

"They have sent to know if we are ready, Eldiva," said Imperia North.

"Well, I am ready now! Once more, dear Aunt Zora! my second mother!" exclaimed the bride, throw-

ing herself into the arms of her protectress for a last embrace.

"God bless you, Diva! Go now, the gentlemen are growing impatient," replied Mrs. Roslyn, kissing her niece, and turning away to conceal her tears.

The three young ladies went down stairs, and were met in the hall by the three gentlemen who took them out to the carriages.

There stood two before the door, with their horses snorting in the night air.

In the first one, which was Mr. John Daw's handsome traveling carriage, the bridegroom handed his bride, and then entered and placed himself by her side.

In the second one, which was the family carriage of the Roslyns, the two groomsmen handed their fair companions, and then seated themselves on the cushions opposite.

The carriages started—that of the newly-wedded pair taking the lead.

The full moon was just rising in the east, and flashing a path of light across the dark current of the Anacostia River.

"They will have a beautiful moonlight drive through the wood!" exclaimed Lancelot Roslyn, as he lifted an old slipper in each hand and threw them after the carriages, which were rolling rapidly away toward the north on their night journey to their ill-fated halting-place—the never-to-be-forgotten Wolf's Head Inn.

Lancelot Roslyn, and all the others who had come out upon the pavement to see the travelers off, now returned within the house, and the doors and windows were closed, and dancing re-commenced with renewed enthusiasm.

The ball was kept up to a very late hour.

At midnight supper was served, and after that the music and dancing was resumed and continued until daylight.

As morning dawned and the guests began to drop off, Zora Roslyn grew anxious for the return of the bridesmaids and groomsmen, who had volunteered as a "guard of honor" to see the bride and groom to the end of the first stage of their journey.

But the last couple had left the floor, and the sable musicians were putting their instruments in green baize bags preparatory to their departure; yet still there was no sign of the returning parties. When all were gone, the lights were put out, and the red glow on the eastern horizon, reflected warmly on the waters of the Anacostia, heralded the rising of the sun, Zora Roslyn still lingered in the deserted rooms with no other companion but Lance.

"It is very strange that they do not come. They should have been back two hours ago. I hope they have not changed their minds about coming home and concluded to stay all night at the Wolf's Head. It would have been improper—*very* improper—*highly* improper!" exclaimed Mrs. Roslyn.

"They've come at last!" exclaimed Lance, as a peremptory knock, or succession of knocks, struck upon his ears.

And as no servant was astir he ran to open the door.

Zora Roslyn, who was very tired, sat down in an armchair to await the entrance of her young friends.

What did she hear?

Voices in subdued confusion, low exclamations, lamentations!

She started up in terror, and ran out to see what misfortune had happened.

Ah! it was a calamity that her most extravagant fears had not leaped to divine.

"Stand aside! let us bring her in," said the commanding voice of Captain Milo Yorke, as, with the help of Lieut. North, he supported the fainting form of some young woman, and led her slowly from the carriage toward the door.

"ELDIVA!" Zora exclaimed, in utter amazement, as she recognized the bride.

The two gentlemen passed on to the drawing-room and carefully laid their burden on the broad sofa under the front windows.

Zora Roslyn turned in consternation to the two pale and trembling girls.

"Imperia! Avonia! what in Heaven's name has occurred?"

"Oh, for the Lord's sake, don't ask, auntie, don't!" cried Avonia, wringing and twisting her fingers, while Imperia bit her lips in silence.

"Is—any one hurt or killed?"

"No, no—nothing like that."

"What then?"

"Oh, auntie! for the love of mercy don't ask me! Besides, we don't any of us rightly know!"

"Where is Mr. John Daw?" suddenly inquired the lady.

"Gone!"

"*Gone?*"

"Yes, gone."

"Where?"

"We don't know."

"I believe you are all mad together! Why did he go?"

"We don't exactly know. Something horrible hap-

pened in the night at the Wolf's Head—we don't know what. Oh, pray, *pray* ask no more questions! Let us go to Eldiva," pleaded Avonia.

The rapid cross-questioning of the girls had not taken more than one minute.

And now, Mrs. Roslyn, anxious as any one else for the safety of her niece, followed them into the drawing-room.

We must go back a few hours to the time when the two carriages containing the wedding party left Shadow Hall for their night ride to the Wolf's Head Tavern, which they reached about eleven o'clock.

The tavern presented a gay scene. The house was lighted up, for the wedding party was expected, and all the lodgers had waited up to witness their arrival.

Besides this, two great stage-coaches were before the door—one from Washington, the other from Baltimore.

Mr. John Daw, very much annoyed at that unexpected publicity given to his nuptials, handed his bride from the carriage, and led her, with her veil down, into the house, where they were politely met by the host, and conducted to the private parlor previously engaged for them.

"I hope you are not fatigued, love," inquired the bridegroom, in a low whisper.

"Oh, not at all," replied the lady, with a smile.

"Will you please to have supper, sir?" inquired the host.

"I—I will send an order in a few minutes. Pray do not wait," answered the guest.

And the landlord bowed and left the room.

His exit was immediately followed by the entrance of the bridesmaids and groomsmen.

They came in laughing and talking merrily, and threw themselves down on sofas, or into chairs.

"Yorke," said the bridegroom, "I wish you would see the landlord and order supper for our party. Tell them to serve it here."

"All right," said Milo Yorke, springing up gayly and going out.

A waiter entered almost immediately and laid the cloth.

Supper was served promptly; for, in fact, everything had been anticipated for the party, and for all description, it is sufficient to say that the repast was worthy of the famous Wolf's Head Tavern.

When it was over, Eldiva retired to her room accompanied by her bridesmaids, who took an affectionate leave of her and returned to the parlor. The gentlemen were taking a parting glass of champagne, and Mr. Daw, on being told that Eldiva had retired, said:

"I will take her up a glass. I will not be gone five minutes. Wait for me."

And he poured out a fresh glass of wine and hurried away with it while it was still foaming and sparkling.

"Come," said Milo Yorke, "we must empty these before the wine is flat."

The two gentlemen lifted their glasses.

At that moment, a piercing scream was heard from above stairs, followed by another and another in quick succession.

The young people in the private parlor sprang to their feet, pale and frightened, looking at each other and then at the door, as if they were, for an instant, uncertain what to do.

But as the screams continued, the two gentlemen started to run to the scene of action. They had just

reached the parlor door when it was burst violently open by the bridegroom, who rushed into the room with the aspect of a maniac.

"In the name of Heaven, what has happened? Is it anything to Eldiva? Where is Eldiva?" demanded Imperia North, who was the first to find the use of her tongue.

"She was not in her room," answered the bridgroom, in a husky voice.

"But where is she?—where?" reiterated Imperia.

A sudden change came over John Daw. By a supreme effort of self-control he became calm; but it was the calmness and coldness of a statue.

"Silence!" he said, sternly and icily. "Never name her in my presence again. The man, or woman, who shall venture to do so will insult me!"

The young people gazed from him to each other in a consternation that deprived them, for the time being, of speech.

The wild screams had ceased, but the whole house was now in commotion.

A waiter entered the room, his face was gray and scared.

"Go to the stables and tell the people there to put my horses to the carriage and bring it around to the door. I return to Washington to-night," said Mr. Daw, throwing himself into a chair, for he seemed no longer able to stand.

The frightened waiter ran out to do his errand.

"You go to Washington to-night!" said Captain Yorke, recovering his speech, and addressing Mr. Daw.

"Yes—and *alone,*" replied the latter firmly and sternly meeting the eyes of the first speaker.

"And—*your wife?*" significantly inquired the young officer.

"I have no *wife!* Thank Heaven, I have no *wife!* And I repeat, sir, and you will do well to listen and remember, that I shall consider the man or the woman who shall venture to name in my presence her who *was* to have been my wife, will offer me a wilful insult—and one which I shall surely meet as it deserves," answered Mr. Daw.

"If you are not quite mad, perhaps you will be so kind as to give some explanation of your strange—your outrageous conduct to us—the friends of the young lady whom you——"

"I can give *you* no explanation, Captain Yorke. When I get back to the city I shall drop a note to Mr. Wells and ask him to call upon me. To him I will explain what has happened to-night, so far as I can explain it."

At this moment the landlady, who had been roused out of her bed, and had dressed herself in a hurry, put her head in at the door and said:

"If you are the friends of the bride upstairs, as I suppose you are, you had better, some of you, go up to her room; for to be plain with you, I believe she is dying."

"Gracious Heaven, what *has* happened to her? Come, Imperia! Come at once! *She* will tell us!" exclaimed Avonia, impetuously rushing out of the room.

Miss North was following quickly, when her brother arrested her steps.

"*We* will not intrude. We must not," he said, alluding to himself and Captain Yorke; "but if we can be of any service let us know at once."

"Yes, yes!" said Imperia, hurrying away.

Wheels were heard drawing up before the door, and horses snorting discontentedly.

A waiter entered the room and said:

"Your carriage waits, sir."

"Good-night, gentlemen," said Mr. Daw, taking up his hat and gloves. "You will find me at 'The Hill,' whenever you may want me, and if one of you could contrive to give me the *coup-de-grace*, I should feel infinitely obliged to you."

Mr. Daw left the room, and a few minutes later his carriage was heard rolling away.

In the meantime the two girls had followed the landlady upstairs and into the very same chamber in which they had left Eldiva safe and well two hours before.

She had got back to the room, at all events.

She was lying on the outside of the bed, with face as white as the dressing-gown she wore. Her eyes were staring straight at the ceiling. Her features were drawn and sharp.

Avonia was the first to reach her side.

"Eldiva!" she whispered, bending low to the death-like face. "How is it with you, dear?"

The fixed, strained eyeballs slowly softened and turned to meet the kind eyes looking on her, and she answered in a low moan:

"I am lost! I am lost! Oh, take me home! Take me home!"

"Do you know me, dear Eldiva?" coaxed Avonia, fearing that her friend was wandering in mind.

"Oh! yes, yes, but take me home! Oh! take me home!" moaned the poor bride.

"Speak to her, Imperia," goaned Avonia, giving place to Miss North.

Imperia bent over Eldiva and inquired:

"Can you tell us—your true friends—what troubles you?"

"No, no; but take me home! Oh, take me home!" moaned the bride.

"I think a doctor ought to be sent for," said Avonia.

"A doctor has been sent for, Miss, nearly three-quarters of an hour ago, and as he don't live more than a half a mile down the road, I expect him here every minute."

At that moment a waiter opened the door and ushered in the doctor.

The landlady turned and greeted him as Dr. Brewer, and began an eager and voluminous account of how she had been "rousted" up by hearing the screams, and upon throwing on her clothes and running into the passage, she had found this lady walking wildly up and down and raving like a mad woman, and how she had lifted her up, for she was but a "light little creetur," and had carried her to this bed, where she soon fell into exhaustion.

"Hysterics," said the doctor, laconically, with his hand upon the patient's pulse.

"Oh, Doctor, no, I think not, sir! She has had some dreadful shock," put in the landlady.

"Ay, doubtless; but this is hysterics, from whatever cause. What has troubled you, my dear?" inquired the old doctor, in a fatherly manner, as he bent over his strange patient.

"I cannot tell you. Oh, no, no, I cannot tell you! Send me home! Oh, tell them to take me home!" pleaded the young woman, in an access of excitement.

The doctor asked for a glass and a spoon, and while the landlady went to fetch them he opened his saddle-bag and selected certain composing cordials.

These he mixed, and of the compound gave the patient half a wine-glass full.

She took it obediently, and in returning the glass renewed her petition:

"Oh, Doctor, tell them to take me home!"

"I see no objection when it is light enough for you to travel safely," replied the physician.

Then he beckoned the landlady to follow him out in the passage.

When the two were alone there outside the closed door, the doctor said:

"I think the sooner she is placed in the care of her family and friends the better. She is barely able to endure the drive back to Washington now. She may not be able to do so a few hours hence."

"I—I hope you are not going away so soon, sir."

"No, I shall remain here to see the lady off. Indeed, I think I shall accompany her as far on her way as Bladensburg, where I have to look in upon a patient—if you will give me a bit of early breakfast before I go."

"Certainly I will, sir. And the young ladies and gentlemen would be glad of a cup of coffee, too, before they start out in the airly morning."

An hour later, the young people, having packed up their effects, prepared the poor bride for her journey, and then breakfasted and set out on their return to the city.

Only the three young ladies occupied the capacious carriage, in which Imperia and Avonia supported the half-fainting form of Eldiva.

The two gentlemen hired horses from the stables of the Wolf's Head, and the doctor rode his own fat cob.

Eldiva never opened her eyes or uttered one word during the entire journey.

At Bladensburg Dr. Brewer parted company with them, warning them not to worry their suffering companion with questions.

The young ladies promised not to do so.

How the party reached Shadow Hall has been told.

CHAPTER V

THE BRIDE'S RETURN

Mrs. Roslyn, in the deepest distress and confusion, overwhelmed the young ladies with questions that they could not answer; but in the midst of all this the condition of her niece called for immediate attention.

With the help of the two young ladies poor Eldiva was carried upstairs to that fine front bedroom in the southern half of the double house which was held in reserve for high occasions, and which had been the scene of the bride's toilet on that wedding morning. It was now the only unoccupied room.

Here they undressed Eldiva and put her to bed, while the messenger who had been dispatched for the family physician hurried away on his errand.

Eldiva had spoken but once since her return. Seeing Mrs. Roslyn bending over her with a face full of tenderness, she murmured:

"Oh! Aunt Zora, your poor Diva is lost—is lost!"

"Do not distress yourself, my dear child. You are with friends who love you," softly answered the lady, as she stooped and kissed her niece.

Eldiva sighed and closed her eyes. Her face was deadly white, her lips blue, her pulse imperceptible.

After a while Mrs. Roslyn whispered to her two companions:

"Stay with her, dear girls, until my return. I hear Aunt and Uncle Wells moving downstairs. I must go and sit at the head of the breakfast table, I suppose; but I will be back as soon as possible."

"Oh, do not hurry on our account, dear auntie. We had a cup of coffee before we left the Wolf's Head," whispered Avonia.

"And oh, listen!" murmured the lady, in the same hushed tones; "do not breathe to a soul that there has been any—any—misunderstanding between the bride and groom. Say to all inquirers that there has been an accident—as there well might be in a night drive over a country road—and that *both* were hurt, though we hope not seriously; and that she was brought here for the present, and *he* carried to his father's house. Oh, great heaven! that I should have to prevaricate so to prevent a scandal! Yet, this is the truth, so far as it goes. Clearly, something has happened—both are hurt in spirit if not in body—and she is here, and he at his father's. Yes, that is the truth, so far as it goes."

The two young girls promised strict compliance with her wishes and she passed swiftly and silently out of the room.

In the dining-room below she found Mr. and Mrs. Wells, full of life and gayety, notwithstanding their three-score and ten years. *They* had no suspicion of anything unpleasant having happened. They had just come down from their bedroom.

Mr. Wells stood, in his white linen suit, on the hearth, with his back to the fireplace, in which bloomed a large

china jar full of pink, blue and white larkspurs and asparagus blossoms. Mrs. Wells had already seated herself at the table.

Mr. Neil Carnes came sauntering in, half asleep, followed by Mr. Phœbus Verne, who held his hand before his mouth, to conceal an irrepressible yawn.

Both of these gentlemen had just come down, and were as yet ignorant of the untoward event of the morning.

Old Biggs brought in the breakfast, and waited at the table. Old Biggs and all the other servants had been in bed and asleep at the time of the bride's unexpected return, and had not yet discovered it.

No one, it will be remembered, had been up at the time except Mrs. Roslyn and her step-son, Lance.

"Our young folks are too much fatigued to join us this morning," said Mr. Neil Carnes.

"Oh! yes," replied Zora Roslyn, with as much indifference as she could assume.

Breakfast over, the guests wandered out into the porch.

Old Mr. Wells lighted his pipe and walked out into the garden.

Zora Roslyn went up into the room, where she had left Eldiva, watched by the two girls. The poor bride lay motionless as before.

"She is sleeping, or she may be. I would not disturb her if I were you, auntie," whispered Avonia.

"Will you two go down and get some breakfast now?"

"Oh! no, I assure you we breakfasted before leaving the Wolf's Head," answered Imperia, for herself and her companion.

"Dear Heaven! how forgetful I am! This shocking

affair has quite distracted me!" suddenly exclaimed Mrs. Roslyn.

"What is it, auntie?"

"Oh! I forgot all about the gentlemen—Captain Yorke and Lieutenant North. I should have sent for them to come in to breakfast," said Mrs. Roslyn, in a tone of vexation.

"Oh! they have both gone. I saw them from the front window walk away together," explained Avonia.

Zora Roslyn then again left the room and went down stairs to her guests. There was a back door leading from the front hall to that side porch where they were assembled. As she entered the porch Old Biggs came to her, saying, as he handed a penciled note:

"It was left by the gentleman, ma'am."

Zora Roslyn opened it and read.

It was merely a note of a few lines from Lieut. North, saying that they—himself and his companion—were going back to their posts of duty, but would be silent as to the affair of the preceding night, and would hold themselves in readiness to serve her or any member of her family, in any way in their power.

Mrs. Roslyn put the note in her pocket, seated herself in a little, low straw chair, and said:

"I—I have something to tell you all that I did not like to tell at the table, for fear it would spoil your appetite. There has been an accident."

"An accident!" exclaimed her hearers in one voice, rising in alarm.

"Yes, an accident might have almost been expected in a night drive from here to the Wolf's Head——"

"Who was hurt?" demanded old Mr. Wells, who had

thrown the ashes out of his pipe and was leaning over the garden gate.

"The bride and groom are both hurt, but not seriously, I believe. She was brought home here as the best place to receive careful nursing. He was taken to his father's house."

"Gracious Heaven! How did it all happen?" demanded Mr. Wells.

"I do not know the particulars. All I can gather is that an accident has happened; the bride and groom are both hurt; she has been brought home to me to be nursed, and he has been carried to his father's house. And that is all," concluded Zora Roslyn.

And that was the story, told, not only to the guests, but to the servants in the house, and to the neighbors who called during the forenoon—all of whom were full of surprise, sympathy and commiseration at this unexpected interruption to the wedding journey.

It was the story told even to the doctor, who called a half hour later, and who, whatever his doubts and suspicions might have been—*being a doctor*—discreetly kept them to himself.

A little later in the forenoon, a mounted groom from "The Hill" rode up to Shadow Hall, delivered a sealed note to Old Biggs to be conveyed to Mr. Wells, and saying that he was not to wait for an answer, rode off again.

Old Biggs went into the porch, where now Mr. Wells sat alone reading the morning paper—the *National Intelligencer*—and delivered the note and the message.

The old gentleman opened the note and read it with amazement and consternation; and then carrying it open in his hand, he arose and went, with a face full of dismay, to seek Zora Roslyn.

He found the lady in the little pantry between the kitchen and the dining-room, giving out preserved fruit and spices, and sugar for the pudding.

Both doors being open, he saw her at once and beckoned her to join him.

Alarmed by the expression on his face, she dropped all that she had in hand and came to him at once.

"For the Lord's sake, my dear," he said, "come out in the garden, where we shall be safe from interruption, and tell me what in the very deuce is the meaning of all this?—that is, if you *can* do so!"

"What is it? What is that note you have got in your hand?" she inquired, as they walked toward the garden-gate.

"It is from Daw. Something frightful—something most deplorable has occurred at the Wolf's Head! Not the common accident of the road, as we were led to suppose," he said, as he took the way to the circular summer-house.

"For Heaven's sake what is it?" she panted, turning pale, as she dropped upon one of the benches. "I dreaded some misfortune by the way in which Eldiva returned home. Yet still I hoped it might be something that could be set right before it became generally known. Oh, what is it?"

"I cannot tell you specifically. I—well, he reserves particulars for a personal interview, to which he invites me this morning. Here, let me read his letter.

"The Hill, May 2d, 18—.

"To Jubal Wells, Esq.

"My Dear Sir: I owe an explanation to Miss Lisburne's family, which, in consideration for her and for them, I have forborne to give to others.

"As it would now be an indecorum for me to intrude at Shadow Hall, I must beg you to come up to The Hill for a conference, in which you will see that the course taken by me last night was the only course left open to a man of honor, under the circumstances.

"When you shall have received my version of the affair you may appeal to her for its confirmation. Finally, if you think proper, you may make the whole story public, though I cannot suppose that you will do so. As for myself, and for the lady's sake, to all except yourself I shall continue to be, as I have been, absolutely silent, allowing the world to judge me as it must, and condemn me as it will.

"Waiting your pleasure, sir, I have the honor to remain, your most obedient servant,

"JOHN DAW."

"There, that's the letter! Now what do you think of it?" continued Mr. Wells, as he folded the paper and thrust it into his pocket.

"I think it is enough to break one's heart and craze one's brain," cried Zora Roslyn.

"But what do you suppose it is all about?"

"I do not know. I have thought about it so much that if I were to think much longer I should go crazy!"

"Then don't think any more. I shall go around to the stable and have Peggy put to the carriage and drive up to The Hill and hear the worst at once."

"Do, Uncle Wells. Oh! what a world to live in!"

Half an hour later Mr. Wells drove off to The Hill. He did not stay long on his errand—and such an errand.

In less than two hours from the moment of his departure he re-entered Shadow Hall.

Zora Roslyn, who was watching for him, ran to open

the front door, and taking his hand, drew him into the drawing-room, which was vacant, and closed and locked the door to prevent interruption.

Then she forced the old gentleman down in a chair and looked at him.

He was very pale and grave; up to this time he had not spoken since his entrance into the house.

"Well, well, well!" impatiently exclaimed Zora Roslyn.

Uncle Jubal took his handkerchief from his pocket and wiped his face as if to gain time.

"Well, well, well!" again impatiently exclaimed Zora Roslyn.

"Well, my dear, I can tell you no more than what you know already," said the old gentleman, with a deep sigh of pain.

"What! Did not *he* tell you, John Daw?" exclaimed the lady, in surprise.

"Yes, he told me all—everything. It was my right to know it, and he told it. A great misfortune has happened, Zora; but *that* you knew already. A misfortune that has separated the young married pair forever; and that in the eyes of all right-thinking men *should* separate them forever."

"Great Heaven! Whose fault was it? *His* or hers?"

"It was neither his fault nor hers. Now that he is calmer he attaches no blame to her whatever. It was not their fault. It was their stupendous and irreparable misfortune," goaned the old gentleman.

"But, for Heaven's sake, tell me the nature of this misfortune!" the lady besought.

"I *cannot,* Zora. You know now all that you or any one will ever know of the calamity that occurred last

night to separate the young pair. I cannot tell you more."

"You mean you will not," resentfully retorted the lady.

"Then, if you prefer to put it so, I *will* not! Be content, Zora, where ignorance is bliss."

CHAPTER VI

RODERICK

On the morning after the woful end of Eldiva Lisburne's wedding day, a woman sat alone in an upper front room of a market gardener's cottage, situated on a country road running west from Georgetown, and facing the high stone walls of the college grounds.

She sat sewing at the front window looking out upon the old wall, while beside her on the floor stood a high basket, piled up with gentlemen's underclothing, upon which she seemed to be at work.

She appeared to be about thirty-five years of age, and yet grandly beautiful, with a tall, full and finely developed form, a noble head and perfect face; her classic profile showing the straight line of the forehead and nose, the short, curved upper lip, the small, full under lip, the slightly projecting chin and the softly rounded curves of the throat.

Her rich, bluish black hair was parted high up on the left side and fell in little rippling black ringlets over the ivory whiteness of her forehead. Her eyes were large, soft, dark blue, shaded by long black lashes and arched

by tapering, jet-black brows. The only color in this faultless face was in the glow of the ruby lips.

The expression of her countenance was so thoughtful, gracious, and dignified that hers might have seemed the face of the ideal princess, rather than of the humble workwoman.

She was clothed in a black serge gown, with a white net handkerchief crossed over her fine bust, and a similar white net cap covering the rich knot of dark hair at the back of her head.

The room in which she sat and sewed was poor enough, but it was scrupulously clean and neat. It seemed to be her only living room. The walls were whitewashed; the floor covered with a "rag" carpet.

She was known to her neighbors as the Widow Dunn, who had come to the city about fifteen years before with a party of English emigrants, all of whom had subsequently gone West, leaving her in Georgetown. She had taken this upper front room in Brown's, the market-gardener's cottage, and she had procured work from the Georgetown College as a plain seamstress to keep in repair the students' underclothing. The work was humble, but the pay was sure.

She had brought with her one son, a boy five years old, very bright and intelligent for his age. She had entered him in the parish school, where his quick intelligence, patient application and rapid progress so won the approbation of his pastors and masters that through their influence he was promoted thence as a free pupil to the preparatory school of Georgetown College, whence he rapidly rose from class to class, until at the last exhibition he had graduated with honors.

His success had been a source of great satisfaction to

the proud mother, who looked upon her handsome, fair-haired Roderick as another "Admirable Crichton."

He was indeed at this time a fine specimen of young manhood, with a tall, well developed and properly proportioned figure, with a regular, aquiline profile, a fair complexion, prominent, light-blue eyes, and pale-yellow hair and mustache. The peculiarity of his face was the snow-white centre of his forehead, which was so much fairer than the other parts of his very fair face.

But, ah! his mother's pride and joy were soon turned into fear and anxiety.

Her son was by birth and inheritance a gentleman; he had received the education of a gentleman; for the last eight years he had lived among gentlemen, always preferring even to spend his holidays in private study at the college with the few foreign students, whose long distance from their homes compelled them to remain, and never visiting his mother's humble lodgings for more than a few hours at a time.

And yet he loved his mother devotedly. In fact he loved her *only,* of all the world—up to the night of the college exhibition. But of that presently. Yes, up to that time all the affection of his heart had concentrated on his beautiful mother, for he had always thought her the most beautiful of all created beings. But he detested her sordid surroundings, although since the day of his graduation, he had come home to share her humble abode. In his childhood he had slept in the same room with his mother; but now, on his return, another room was engaged for him; a tiny room, at the head of the stairs, over the front door and joining her own. It was just large enough to hold a cot, a washstand and a chair, and over these two last articles of furniture, a row of wooden pegs to hang clothes.

Since he had been living at home, his dissatisfaction with life, his vague but bitter resentment against fate constantly betrayed themselves, and made his mother very unhappy. He wanted to study one of the learned professions—the law as a matter of preference—for the law, he said, was the only calling by which a "gentleman" might rise to political eminence in a republican country; and to such an eminence he aspired. But how should he study law under present circumstances? Neither himself nor his mother had a cent laid up. His mother could earn two or three dollars a week, but it took all of that, he knew, now that he was living at home, to buy the plainest food and the scantiest fuel and to pay the rent.

Roderick resolved to seek some employment "suitable to a young gentleman" by which he might make money enough to pay for his legal studies. He could not advertise, for neither he nor his mother had a dollar to spare in such a speculation; but every day he visited the public reading rooms in Washington to look over all the papers for advertisements that held out any hope for employment for him. And he answered every one that he found, and always gave the learned and venerable fathers of Georgetown College as his references; but though he had applied in turn for situations as bookkeeper, salesman, teacher in a public school, tutor in a private family, usher in an academy, he had not succeeded in getting any employment "suitable to a gentleman," and so, up to the present day, he had remained in the humiliating idleness very unsuitable to an able-bodied young man.

And so he fell into the deepest depression of spirits and the darkest despondency of mind—a mood in which

some men commit suicide, leaving other men to wonder why on earth they did it.

Ruth Dunn saw this dangerous and ever-deepening despair on the part of her son, and tried many times to induce him to talk freely to her, so that she might try to comfort him.

"For if I do not know where your wound is, how shall I ever be able to heal it?" she said to him, at last.

Then he told all, and found relief in unburdening his oppressed heart and laying all his heavy troubles before her who loved him more than the life which she had consecrated to him.

He told her the grief and shame he felt in seeing her, his dear mother, so humbly placed and so menially employed.

She took his hand then and bade him remember that poverty was no reproach, and that work was holy. And she told him that for herself she was quite content, that he must not mind her, but pass on to his own personal matters.

Then he told her of all his ambition to rise in this world—to rise to eminence. He felt conscious of abilities to attain the highest position in the profession he longed to follow. But, he complained, he was fettered at the very outset by contracting want. He had no money to pay for a course of lectures at the Law School, or even to buy a text-book on the subject, and he had no means of making money. He said that he had answered advertisements and applied for situations of all sorts not absolutely menial, but without any success; and that now he utterly despaired of ever doing anything in this world.

Then again his mother took his hand and smiled on him, saying that "despair" at his age, with his good

health, good education and fine talents, was simply absurd; that it was less than a year since he had graduated; that if he had not yet found employment he must still continue to seek it, and that as sure as fate he would find it before long, and then he could save money and begin his law course.

"But I am thinking, dear Roderick," she continued, "that there is something deeper than this delay in finding employment—something very much deeper than that which distresses you."

"Why—what makes you think so, mother dear?" he inquired, with a flushed face and faltering voice.

She looked at him with a world of love in her smiling dark eyes, and inquired archly:

"Who is she?"

"Oh, mother! mother dear! How—what do you mean? When—who told you? Why, I never breathed her name to mortal man or woman! How could you have known?" demanded the young man, as much covered with blushing confusion as a young girl might have been. "How *do* you know this, mother?"

"By mother wit, by mother love; besides," added the lady, with a touch of pathos in her tone, "I *have* been young myself, Roderick, dear."

Her words seemed a revelation to him, showing her in a new, transfiguring light. He had never thought of his mother as ever having been youthful, never thought of her but as he had known her all his own short life—a plodding, patient widow in a black gown and a white cap.

A flood of unutterable tenderness passed over him as he looked at her, still so grandly beautiful; still the most beautiful creature (save one) that he had ever seen in this world; and he wondered—for the first time—

what the story, what the tragedy of her young life had been; and why she had never once spoken to him of his father.

All these thoughts and emotions swept rapidly through his mind and he took his mother's hand, and with fullness of affection and reverence raised it to his lips and pressed it to his heart, murmuring:

"Yes, you have been young, and you have loved, and you have lost him you loved. Oh, dearest mother, I feel and know now, for the first time, how much you must have suffered in your youth! Tell me all about it, mother dear, and let me make up to you for all you have had to do and to bear!"

The lady lifted the hand that he had kissed and released, and she passed it caressingly over his fair hair and smiled as she replied:

"That was long ago, Roderick, and *you have* comforted me——"

"Ah! not so much yet! I have been selfish and thoughtless; but I will—indeed I will!" said the young man, penitently.

"You have *always* comforted me, even from the time when you lay a little, helpless unconscious infant on my bosom, yet with all Heaven about you: you were as the very balm of Gilead to the wounded spirit. But let us not talk of me: but of yourself and your fair one. *Who is she?*"

"Oh! sweetest mother, I do not know," replied the youth.

"You do not know! And yet are sighing your soul away for her?" archly inquired the lady.

"No, indeed, I do not know her name, or who she is, or whence she came—I only know she is an angel!" exclaimed the young man.

"*That* is understood, of course," said the lady gravely, drawing down the corners of her lips to keep from smiling. "But tell me all about it. Where did you make this angel's acquaintance?"

"I have not made her acquaintance. Don't you see if I *had* I should know her name, or something about her which I do not?"

"Ah! certainly, I forgot. But to amend my question: Where did you first see her?"

"At the college, on the last night of the exhibition, where the Thespian Corps presented Shakespeare's tragedy of Richard III. and I took the tile rôle. Why, *you* were there, mother! You *must* have noticed her!" exclaimed the young lover, in a reproachful and half-defiant tone, as who should say:

"Now *don't* say that you were in the same hall with that transcendant creature, without being conscious of her divine presence?"

The mother *felt* the unspoken rebuke and smiled archly, even while answering deprecatingly:

"I—do not—quite remember. Did she sit near me?"

"Near you! Oh! dear, no! She was in the third row of seats, directly before the stage."

"And I was at least a dozen seats behind her, with a dense crowd of people between us; so, of course, you know I could not have seen this young lady. And yet a being of such transcendant beauty must have been noticed by those facing her from the stage," said the widow slyly.

"Yes indeed, it would seem so!" naïvely exclaimed the young man; "but they did not seem to have seen her—the egotistical dolts! they were thinking too much about themselves."

The lady laughed, and inquired:

"Would you have been any better satisfied if they had all observed her and fallen desperately in love with her?"

"Well, no, I wouldn't!" the young man admitted, with a slight smile; then more gravely he added:

"There, mother dear, I have told you my secret, *all* my secrets, and I feel some relief in confiding them to you. But now do you wonder that I yield to despair?"

"To depression, my dear boy, but not to despair! If you persevere you will certainly succeed."

"You have inspired me with fresh hope and courage, dear mother, and I *will* persevere. I am going down to the hotel now to look over the advertisements in the papers at the reading room. I will return to dinner," said the young man, cheerfully, as he arose, took his hat and left the house.

This conversation had taken place the last day of April—the day preceding the disastrous wedding of John Daw and Eldiva Lisburne.

Roderick Dunn had scarcely been gone half an hour when he returned with his countenance beaming with hope.

He threw his hat on the table, dropped himself into a chair, and said, in answer to the widow's inquiring look:

"Yes, mother, I have two more chances this morning, and I have taken time by the forelock."

"What are they, Roderick?"

"Two new advertisements of situations in this morning's *National Intelligencer*. The first is for an amanuensis, private secretary and reader to an elderly gentleman, offering board, lodging, washing, the use of a saddle horse, and five hundred dollars a year salary, but *requiring* in the applicant a collegiate education, an

irreproachable character, the manners and appearance of a gentleman, and the highest testimonials. Applications were to be directed to R. D., office of the *National Intelligencer*. Well, mother, I have written my application for the place and dropped the letter in the box."

"I really think you will get that place, my dear," said the lady.

"I hope I may; but why do you think so?" eagerly demanded the young man.

"Because of the unusually exacting requirements, my dear. Young gentlemen who could meet all those would not be likely to want such a situation. Your case is an exceptional one."

"Yes, there is something in that. But even if I should not succeed in getting this place, there is another chance that I must look after at once."

"And that, my dear?"

"It is not so good as the first-mentioned, but better than nothing. It is an advertisement for a bookkeeper at Locust Mills, on the Washington and Baltimore Turnpike, almost five miles beyond the Wolf's Head Tavern. The applications are to be made on the premises in person."

"The distance is long," sighed the widow, with the knowledge that the stage fare thither would cost more money than could be scraped together in a week.

"Yes, the distance is long, but the weather is fine and the road is good, so I shall set off to walk it early to-morrow morning."

"To walk it!"

"Yes, mother, dear. I would start *now*, only I should not be able to reach the Mills before eight or nine o'clock, when of course they would be closed for the

night and every one gone away. Don't worry, mother dear; I must go. It will not do to let any chance slip."

"But—suppose you should get the situation of private secretary to the old gentleman?"

"Then I should politely withdraw my application for the bookkeeper's place," said the young man.

He had some little matters to attend to that afternoon —particularly to pawn his gold medal and a few silver ones to raise a little money for his journey, for to set out on such a tramp without a dollar in his pocket would scarcely have been prudent.

He went out and did his business without any difficulty, and after a very short absence returned and spent the rest of the day with his mother.

At sunrise the next morning, having eaten a very early breakfast, he set out on his long walk—a walk that he was destined to have the bitterest cause to remember to the latest hour of his life.

The widow passed the day as she passed at least three hundred days in the year—in darning scores of socks and sewing on dozens of buttons.

At night she went to bed, praying, as usual, for her son, but not the least anxious on account of his absence. She was not morbid.

CHAPTER VII

A MYSTERY AND A REVELATION

And on this second day of May we find her seated in her neat room, and engaged in her usual work. She was expecting Roderick every moment. It was now past noon, and she thought he ought to have been home be-

fore this. However, she remembered that the walk was long and wearisome, and she was willing to wait.

At all events, before she had time to grow seriously anxious she head the front door open and hasty footsteps ascend the stairs.

The next moment Roderick Dunn entered the room and threw himself into the nearest chair, casting his hat, with some violence, upon the floor.

The widow stared for an instant. Was this her handsome, fair-haired blooming son—this pallid, ghastly, wild-looking man?

"Roderick!" she exclaimed, dropping her work and rising. "Roderick, what ails you?"

"I—am tired with my long walk, for one thing," he said, running his fingers through his light hair, and then drawing a handkerchief from his pocket and wiping his face.

"Yes, it was too much for you; lie down on the bed," said his mother, going and removing some piles of folded shirts that lay upon the quilt.

He arose and staggered toward the bed and threw himself upon it.

"Now, lie there quietly, and, after answering one question, don't even speak. Did you get the book-keeper's place?"

"No, mother! a man from Baltimore was ahead of me and got it."

"Because he came down by stage and you had to walk all the way up, I suppose."

"I suppose so," said the young man, wearily turning his face to the wall.

"Poor boy! Well, never mind! it is all for the best, I think. You will get the other place. I wonder if

there is not a letter in the postoffice for you even to-day? You did not call to see on your way out?"

"No," with a sigh.

"There, I am cruel. I will not make you talk any more. Lie still and rest. I will have a cup of coffee for you in a trice, and when you have drunk it you will feel better," said the mother; and she went out and took away the blue screen from the fireplace, got some waste paper and light wood from the lower closet in a corner cupboard, kindled a bright fire, and hung a small kettle of water over the blaze.

Moving softly through the room she set out the table, covered it with a clean, much-darned cloth, and placed upon it her best blue china, and bread, butter and cold mutton.

Then she ran downstairs to the market-gardener's premises and brought up a mug of sweet cream, a bunch of radishes, and a head of lettuce.

When she had made the coffee, and all was ready, she went to the side of the bed to see if her idol were sleeping.

No; he was broad awake, staring at the back wall.

"Roderick, dear, shall I bring you a cup of coffee here, or will you sit up at the table?"

"I will get up, mother. I am not—so much hurt, and am not a baby. I shall be all right again presently," said the young man, rising, as with an air of impatience at his own weakness, and sitting down at the table.

He eagerly drank the coffee that she poured out for him, and made a feint of eating the more substantial food; but instead of really doing so he drank a second and a third cup of coffee, and then drew away from the table and seated himself near the window.

His mother glanced at him from time to time, but

said nothing until she had cleared the table, washed the dishes, and restored the room to order.

Then she resumed her low sewing-chair at the window near which her son was sitting silent and moody.

Presently, without looking up from her work, she said gently:

"Roderick, dear, tell me all about it. It will relieve you."

The young man started, and in a low and hurried tone inquired:

"All about what, mother? I don't understand."

"About your new trouble, dear."

"What—what new trouble? Have you heard—heard anything?" he inquired, in a tone of trepidation.

"'Heard?' No, dear; what should I have heard? Was there anything particular to hear?" she anxiously inquired.

He did not answer.

"Why should you have supposed that I had heard anything, Roderick?" she asked, raising her eyes to his.

Looking away from her, and out of the window upon the college wall, he answered, confusedly:

"I thought so from your question, mother, when you asked me to tell you all about it."

"Oh, Roderick, dear, I had heard nothing, even if there was anything particular to hear. I can *see* that it is not only bodily fatigue that has overcome you. You have had a surprise, a shock, of some sort. I know you have."

"Mother, you are a witch!"

"Now, will you tell me all about it, Roderick?"

The young man made a gesture of impatience—not so much at his mother as at himself.

"Why are you so vexed at yourself, dear?" inquired the widow.

The young man laughed in a harsh, self-scorning manner as he answered:

"Because I have been a fool! Such a Heaven-forsaken, accursed idiot!"

"RODERICK!"

"Yes, I have! That's all!" exclaimed the young man, rising, and beginning to walk the floor in an access of excitement.

"Roderick, love, don't you think you would feel better if you were to open your heart to me, as you did once before? To whom should you tell your troubles if not to your own mother? Especially as you and I have only each other in the wide world," said Ruth Dunn, tenderly.

"Only each other," repeated Roderick.

"I did you good the last time you confided in me; and I might do you good now. Tell me, Roderick: Have you seen *her* since you left home?"

The young man came and dropped into his seat again before he answered, under his breath:

"Yes, I have seen her."

"Ah! then, that accounts for all! Where did you meet with her, Roderick?"

"At the Wolf's Head Tavern, where I stopped last night," said the young man; and the ice being now broken, he told the story, and seemed to find relief in doing so.

"When I set out to walk from Washington to Locust Mills I felt fresh and strong enough to go the whole journey without resting, but by noon, when I reached the Wolf's Head, I was so tired that I stepped in under the veranda to rest and call for a glass of beer. I found

the whole house in a hubbub of excitement in preparing to receive a fashionable wedding party who were to arrive late that night *en route* for Baltimore and the Northern cities. The bride and groom were Mr. and Mrs. John Daw, of Washington."

"*Who?*" breathed the widow, in a low and almost inaudible voice, and with a paling cheek, as she bent over her work. "*Who* did you say?"

"Mr. and Mrs. JOHN DAW," replied the young man, giving the name very distinctly. "I don't know who *she* was, but *he* is the son of the millionaire landholder of Washington, Lord John Daw. Of course, you have heard of *him*. Everybody has."

"Yes, I have heard of him," breathed the lady, very softly.

"Well, when I heard that there was to be such a 'to do' at the Wolf's Head that night, I made up my mind *not* to stop there on my way home, but to get on to Rossburg, if possible. But 'man proposes,' and—you know the usual result. I rested an hour at the Wolf's Head, and then walked on to Locust, where I arrived at 3 p. m., very much fatigued."

"I don't wonder," said the sympathizing listener.

"I had to wait until nearly five o'clock before I could see the proprietor, and then I was told that I was hours too late, the place having been given to a man from Baltimore who had just left the office."

"As I said before, my dear, I am not sorry that you were disappointed in that situation. I feel sure that you will get the better one for reasons that I have already given you."

"Perhaps I may, mother."

"Go on, my dear."

The young man drew a deep breath like a sigh, and continued:

"It was near six o'clock when I set out on my return journey. I walked slowly, so that it was nine o'clock when I again reached the Wolf's Head Tavern. I did not intend to stop all night at the Wolf's Head on account of that wedding party which was expected, but as they were not to arrive before twelve, midnight, and there was a stage-coach to pass the tavern on its way to Washington at half-past ten, I thought I would lie down and sleep for an hour, and then return to the city by the coach, as the cost of that ride would be little.

"Well, mother mine, I engaged a vacant room for my nap by paying a trifle, and went and laid down and fell into a sleep that was more like a swoon than a natural slumber. I slept so long and soundly that I did not wake up until I was aroused by the bustle of some unusual occurrence.

"I summoned a waiter, and then discovered that I had overslept myself by nearly two hours. It was now past midnight. The Washington coach had gone by an hour and a half before, and the wedding party had just arrived.

"Then, mother, there was nothing else for me to do but to resign myself to the inevitable and spend the night at the inn."

Here the young man paused so long and so moodily that the widow jogged his memory by saying:

"It was there you saw the young lady?"

"Yes, it was there I saw the young lady," answered the young man, and he said no more, but fell into a moody silence again.

"And—was she the bride, my poor boy?" inquired the

widow, shrewdly guessing that now she had got to the root of the young lover's new trouble.

"Oh, no, mother! Thank Heaven she was not the bride, but one of the bridesmaids. You see I got up and went downstairs to see if I could get anything to eat, and while I stood in the passage three young ladies came out of the parlor and went upstairs. The sight of the last one that passed nearly took away my breath, for *it was she!* the angel of my dream! And while I stood gazing after her, a waiter who was crossing the hall with a tray of dishes in his hand, pointed out the bride to me —the first of the three that were ascending the stairs— a tall, fair, imperial beauty, but not a woman for me to love!—not my dark-eyed angel!" murmured the young man, as he fell again into silence.

"Did you see her afterward?" inquired the widow, with a view of rousing him.

"Yes—once more," said Roderick, and he said no more until his mother had put another question.

"Did you discover her name?"

"Yes—by the merest chance. As I went up the stairs behind her—she being near the top, I being near the bottom—I saw something white slip from her pocket or her hand. It fluttered down to my feet, and—I felt as if it was a white dove from her pure bosom! I picked it up and found that it was a delicate lace handkerchief, with the subtle perfume of violets in it. I took it upstairs, just in time to see her half way down the passage."

"And you restored it to her, and so got to speak to her—and in doing so you said something indiscreet which called forth a rebuke that has wounded your feelings and caused you to be so vexed with yourself, and to call *my son* an idiot in pretty strong language. But

don't be too hard on Roderick, for I dare say the young lady is not," said the widow, archly.

"No, mother, you are altogether wrong. For when I saw her halfway down the passage she was entering a bedchamber, in attendance upon the bride, the fair Juno I told you about. So I took my prize into my own room and examined it by the light of my lamp. There I found her name—*Eldiva*—minutely worked in hair—dark hair like her own," added the lover, musingly, and then again he dropped into silence.

"But you restored the handkerchief finally?" inquired the honest widow.

"No—I brought it away with me! Here it is! But I *will* restore it, some time or other," said the young man, as he drew the fragile fabric of lace and cambric from his bosom, and laid it before his mother.

Ruth Dunn gravely shook her head at her son, saying:

"Love laughs at *laws* as well as at locksmiths, it seems, Roderick!"

He smiled for the first time since his re-entrance into the house, saying:

"I mean to return it! Indeed I do, mother! I only wish to keep it a little while, because it seems a part of herself."

"Do you know *where* to return it?"

"No, but I will try to find out."

"You could advertise the handkerchief. It is worth it."

"Yes, I could do that; but I do not wish to."

"And talking about advertisements, had you not better go to the postoffice—if you are sufficiently rested—and see if there is a letter in answer to your application for the private secretary's place?" suggested the practical mother.

"Yes, I will go at once," replied her son, and he picked up his hat and left the house.

Ruth Dunn worked on for half an hour longer, at the end of which time Roderick returned with a rather more cheerful countenance.

"Good news, Roderick?" exclaimed the lady.

"Yes, mother! You were a true prophetess, and I have as good as got the place!" answered the young man, drawing from his pocket a large letter, directed in a large hand and sealed with a large red seal.

"That is from the gentleman who advertised for an amanuensis, then?"

"Yes; that is, it is from his agent, which amounts to the same thing—and who do you think the gentleman is?"

"How in the world should I be able to guess, my dear? Is he a cabinet minister, a senator, or anything of that sort?"

"No!"

"Then you must tell me, for I could never guess right."

"Well, then, he is—Lord John Daw!"

"Great Heaven!"

These words escaped the widow, in a low-breathed ejaculation, as she bent down over her work, with a face turned ashen gray in hue.

"Yes," continued the young man, who, in his preoccupation, had not observed the effect of his communication—"Lord John Daw, the millionaire landholder and the most influential private gentleman in Washington. You said this morning, when I mentioned his son's marriage, that you had heard of him, I think?"

"Yes," breathed the lady, in an expiring voice, as she slightly shifted the position of her low sewing chair, so

as to turn her back to the window and bring her agitated face into the shade.

"Well," continued the young man, "he writes to me—or, what amounts to the same thing, Mr. Richard Daly, his agent, writes to me, that—— But I had better read his letter, had I not?"

"Yes," sighed the lady, in a tone as soft as the lowest note of the Eolian harp.

Roderick Dunn, still absorbed in the subject of his situation, unfolded the letter and read:

"The Hill, Washington, May 1st, 18—.

"Sir:—I am in receipt of your letter of this morning, applying for the situation of amanuensis advertised in this day's *Intelligencer*.

"Lord John Daw, my honored principal, instructs me to say that your letter of application, in its composition, chirography, and references, has impressed him most favorably in behalf of the writer.

"His lordship further directs me to request you to wait on him, at his residence, called The Hill, at 11 o'clock A. M. on Friday, for a personal interview.

"Respectfully,

"Richard Daly."

"That will be to-morrow morning," said the young man, folding up the agent's letter and replacing it in his pocket.

"Yes," murmured the lady, in an almost-inaudible voice.

He lifted his eyes to look at her, and those eyes dilated to a gaze. It was now *his* turn to discover signs of extreme mental disturbance in *her*.

"Mother!" he suddenly exclaimed. "What is the

matter with you, dear? To all that I have communicated you have only answered by sighing 'Yes' and 'Yes' in the faintest voice! Dear mother, is it possible that you don't like the idea of my taking the situation under Lord John Daw? It is the first offer I have had, and it is an excellent position. If I should happen to please my patron it may lead to something much higher—for he is a man of great influence. Still, if for any personal reason whatever—though I cannot imagine what it can be—you object to my taking this position, I will decline it. You have only to speak, dear mother!"

"Give me time," pleaded the lady, still in a very low voice, while her son gazed on her in surprise and perplexity. "Give me a little time. I did not *dream* that *he* was the advertiser—that it was to *him* you were to go."

"Is there any objection, dear mother?"

"Yes—no—I don't know! Oh, Roderick, my dear, I cannot say whether I should rejoice or lament at this fatality!" murmured the widow, wringing her hands.

"Fatality! Mother!"

"Yes, fatality! for this offer from——" She paused, caught her breath, and continued in a still lower tone—"this offer from Lord John Daw is a fatality, for good or for evil!"

"Mother! I don't understand you!"

"No! how should you? But this offer has precipitated a revelation that must some time have been made to you," said Ruth Dunn, and then she paused so long, as her son sat gazing on her, that at last he repeated, interrogatively:

"A revelation, dear mother?"

"Yes. Every one takes it for granted that I am a widow, though I have never called myself one," she said,

as a flush passed over her pale face and mounted even to the edges of her dark hair.

"And—are you not a widow, dear mother?" inquired Roderick, in much surprise.

"No," sighed the lady.

"My father is living, then!"

"Yes!"

"Good Heaven! Where is he? Who is he?"

"Lord John Daw!"

CHAPTER VIII

"LOVE, STILL LOVE"

"LORD JOHN DAW is your father!"

Had Roderick Dunn heard aright? *Had* his mother really spoken these very words?

He doubted his own ears until he saw her head droop, her face bury itself in her open hands, and her ears burn with the blush that overspread her whole countenance.

Then he turned pale. He could hardly utter the words that fell heavily, one by one, from his lips:

"Lord—John—Daw—my—father?"

She nodded with a tearless sob.

"How is it, then, that while he luxuriates in wealth we suffer in want? How is it that neither you nor I bear his name?"

For all answer, from the woman's overcharged bosom broke forth a storm of tears and sobs.

Roderick knelt by her side and put his arm around her waist and drew her head upon his bosom, where she gasped and panted forth the last throes of her paroxysm of passionate sorrow in these whispered words:

"I am going to tell you why! I am going to tell you everything!—and, first of all, that it is not my fault. Oh, indeed, indeed, my boy, it is not my fault!"

"I know that, mother. I know that perfectly well. Why—why should you think it necessary to tell me so?" demanded Roderick, stooping and pressing his lips to her forehead.

"And yet it was a strange piece of news I told you, dearest," she sighed.

"Yes, it was strange—very strange, and there has been frightful wrong-doing somewhere; but not with you, dear mother, not with you!"

"Bless you for your faith in me, my son!" fervently replied the mother.

"Faith? It is *sight!* It is knowledge! I have known you all my life, dear mother!" he exclaimed, with a slight laugh; "and I know that you could never have been either wicked or—*weak,*" he added, in a graver voice.

"That is the truth, dear boy. And oh, what a comfort that you should know it to be the truth even before I have proved it!"

"But, dearest mother, you have proved it! Your whole life has proved it. I told you that my estimate of my mother's worth was the result of knowledge."

"Dear Roderick, you have faith in *me,* and now, before I begin my story, I must invoke your—charity—for—*some one else,*" she said, in a hesitating manner.

"For Lord John Daw, to wit!" said the youth.

"For your father, my dear!" pleadingly suggested the mother.

"Hum—we'll see, after I have heard your story, whether I'll honor 'my lord' with the higher title!" said Roderick.

"It is sometimes hard to judge righteous judgment. It was hard for me to do so when the test came," sighed Ruth Dunn.

And then she began the story of her sad young life:

"I do not remember my poor father. He was a village doctor, and died of typhus fever contracted during an epidemic, in which he devoted himself day and night with such untiring zeal to the sick as to break down his strength and render him an easy victim to the disease which carried him off.

"I, his first and only child, was then but three years old. My mother, left almost destitute by his death, sold the surgery and fixtures, and, with the proceeds, took a larger house and furnished it for lodgers.

"Our village was much frequented by gentlemen during the fishing season, and among my first impressions of life was the annual inroad of lodgers that came at that season.

"Here, in my widowed mother's lodging-house, I grew up to the dangerous, 'bad eminence' of being called 'the village beauty.' If I tell you this, and also tell you that before I had completed my sixteenth year I had had several eligible offers of marriage, it is not from vanity, but for truth's sake.

"However, neither the attorney's son, the doctor's assistant, nor the curate were to my taste, no, nor to my mother's; for these little gentlemen of the little country town were as impecunious as they were unattractive.

"And as for the lodgers who did me the honor of demanding my hand, they were generally city clerks or shopmen with small salaries, enjoying short holidays. Neither my mother nor I would look at any of them in a matrimonial light.

"But, at length, just as I had entered my seventeenth

year, there came to the village a gentleman, who introduced himself as Mr. John Dawson. He came very early in the season, before we had any other lodgers, and he engaged the whole of my mother's house—except, of course, our own private apartments—saying that he disliked the company of strangers and was willing to pay for his privacy—which he did by advancing the rent for two months. He was attended by a valet and groom, who were also to be accommodated in the house.

"I was not at home at the time of these negotiations. I was spending the day in the village church, helping to train the Sunday-school children in singing and recitations for a coming festival. So I heard nothing of the new lodger until I returned in the evening.

"Then my mother had a great deal to tell me about him, his distinguished appearance, his wealth, his liberality.

" 'A true gentleman, without doubt, my dear,' she said; 'a true gentleman in every sense of the word! Why, his very servants, his valet and his groom, are more refined in manners than the young men we have hitherto had down here.'

"All this piqued my curiosity to see the new lodger. But this curiosity was not immediately gratified. Mr. Dawson kept himself very quiet, was waited on by his own servants, and went in and out unperceived. Only Ann, our maid-of-all-work, who had better opportunities of seeing him, gave me those particulars which my mother did not consider of sufficient importance to communicate.

" 'Mr. Dawson is very handsome, Miss,' she told me that night, while I was with her in the kitchen helping to get the new lodger's tea. 'Very handsome and grand-looking; not so very tall, but quite elegant, with a beau-

tiful, fair complexion, and light hair and blue eyes. I'm sure you will admire him when you see him, Miss, and I expect you will see him at church to-morrow, for the Missis has offered him a seat in her pew,' concluded the girl.

"All that was news to me. My mother had not mentioned our lodger's good looks, nor her polite offer of her pew to him. So when I had sent up the gentleman's tea I went into our sitting room, where my mother was at work, and asked her if she had invited our lodger to a seat in our pew.

" 'Yes,' she said, 'I could not in common civility do otherwise, when Mr. Dawson asked me whether we had free seats. He seems a very nervous gentleman, and I was glad to offer him the use of our pew, where, dear knows, there's plenty of room for a visitor.'

"I said no more. I was glad my mother had done this, so that I could have a good opportunity of seeing our new lodger.

"The next morning being Sunday, my mother and myself got ready early to go to church, in advance of our lodger, so that we might be in our pew to receive him when he should come.

"But as we stepped out of the door on the sidewalk we were joined by a gentleman who was already walking there, and who politely lifted his hat to my mother, and remarked that he hoped she would permit him to attend her to the church, as he did not know the way thither.

" 'Certainly, sir,' my mother replied, and then, with a slight indication of my presence, said, 'My daughter.'

"Again the gentleman lifted his hat and then he turned to walk with us. He walked by my side, not, as it seemed to me from preference, but from necessity, as

he could not have done otherwise without taking the wall of my mother.

"I had no opportunity then of viewing him without looking directly at him; but in the first glance, when we had met for an instant face to face, I had seen, as had been reported to me, that he was very handsome; a blonde of the fairest type, with bright, yellow hair, light blue eyes, and a complexion as fine and clear as that of the fairest girl. Why," suddenly broke off the narrator, turning to her son, "if you wish to know how he appeared go and look at yourself in the glass. He was *then* what you are now in features and complexion; only not so tall and stout. You take your form from my side of the house, dear Roderick!"

"Mother!" replied the young man, "I am sorry that I look like him. I don't admire him. But go on with your story, although it hardly needs the telling. It is one of those stories which tells itself."

"No, it does not, my boy! There are matters—— But you will see," replied the lady. And then she resumed her narrative:

"Our lodger entered into conversation with us as we walked on, and inquired about our church, whether it was well attended, and our minister, whether he was a true minister of religion or merely a professional preacher, and seemed so interested that he won my mother's predisposition in his favor.

"He seldom addressed his conversation to me, not even where it concerned me, as it did when he told my mother that he had the pleasure of seeing me once before, when I assisted at a flower table at a fair in the neighboring town. I did not remember the circumstance at all, and told him so, at which I thought he seemed disappointed, even though he explained that he

had been in the town but an hour on his way to the North, and while waiting for a stage-coach to continue his journey he had lounged into the fair and had seen me at a table, very much surrounded by customers, and that he had bought a bouquet from another lady at the table, as I had no time to attend to him. This was only ten days ago, he added, and he had not had time to forget a pleasant face, was glad to meet me again, and so forth.

"Our conversation ended at the church door. He accompanied us to our pew, and was very devout during the services. I tell you all this because it was on the occasion of my first meeting and first acquaintance with the man who was destined to have such an influence over my whole after life.

"Mr. Dawson walked home with us after the benediction. And he went to church with us again in the afternoon. When we returned in the evening he lingered a while in the front hall to thank my mother for her 'kindness' to him and to express his pleasure in the sermons he had heard that day.

"The door of our sitting-room, which was on the ground floor front, stood open, and our attractive little tea-table stood ready. So what could my poor mother do but invite our lodger to come in and take a cup of tea with us.

"He gratefully accepted the invitation, and spent the evening with us, making himself so very agreeable and interesting that my mother was more than ever pleased with him, and after he had bidden us good-night she grew quite enthusiastic in his praise.

"'So different,' she said, 'from all the other young men who had ever come to lodge at our house—profane young snobs that never entered a place of worship, but

passed their Sundays in smoking, drinking and carousing. Such a satisfaction,' she declared, 'to have so moral and religious a gentleman in the house, where there were only two lone women, and to have no one else to be bothered with.'

"Well, after what I have told you, Roderick, you will be prepared to hear that an intimate friendship grew up between ourselves and our lodger. He ceased to be a stranger to us, and therefore he ceased to be a stranger in the village. Our rector, seeing him in our pew every Sunday, at both services, called on him at our house, and afterward invited him to dinner.

"As for myself——" The lady paused thoughtfully for a little while, and then continued: "I soon learned that he loved me, for there are tones and looks that speak more eloquently than words, and I knew that he did, even before he told me that he had loved me from the first moment he saw me at the flower-table of the fair, and that he had taken infinite pains to find out who I was and where I lived, and, finally, that he had come down to our remote corner of England only to see me in the hope of winning my hand.

"He *did* love me. Of that I am as sure, *now,* after all these years, as I was on the day that he told me so. He loved me with all the strength of his soul; and his great love won mine completely. He said he had come to win my heart, and he won it; and he won *more,* in the esteem and friendship of all our neighbors, including our good rector. His last winning was my poor mother's consent to our marriage.

"This was near the end of the season, when the day drew near for his return to London. In asking for me he offered to give references, saying, that as he had come a perfect stranger among us she had a right to demand

his credentials before giving him such an irrevocable pledge of confidence as the hand of her daughter.

"My mother had such implicit faith in her lodger that she repudiated the idea of requiring anything of the sort from him; but he assured her that she should have them if only for the satisfaction of her less confiding friends, and in a few days he showed her letters from Richard Daly, Esq., of Lincoln's Inn, London, and from Lord John Daw, Lowater, Leicestershire. Those letters my mother showed to the rector, who said that he knew Lord John Daw by reputation as the younger son of the Duke of Alton, and as a leader in all enterprises affecting the welfare and progress of society, and that a credential from his lordship was highly satisfactory.

"So well satisfied was my dear mother that she made no objection to our speedy marriage when it was urged by Mr. Dawson, who gave as a reason for his haste the necessity he was under of returning to London at once.

"Well, we were married in our parish church by our beloved rector, whose daughter was my bridesmaid and whose son was our groomsman. The village doctor gave me away, saying, gravely, that as he was my father's successor in his profession it devolved upon him to perform some of my father's duties. My dear mother gave a wedding breakfast to as many of our friends and neighbors as our house would accommodate, and after the breakfast we took leave of our friends and started for London, Mr. Dawson promising to bring me back every summer to spend the season with my mother, and exacting a promise from her to come to us at the end of a month for a long visit, and embracing and kissing my mother as fondly as if he had been her own son.

"'Oh! am I not blessed in my son-in-law?' said my poor mother, with tears of joy in her eyes, as she ap-

pealed to our friends and neighbors who were assembled to see us off. The stage-coach had called for us, and could not wait; so we were hurried in, and were soon rolling onward along the London road, as it was called, though we were some hundred miles from that great city.

"We traveled only by day, stopping at the principal post towns on our route, so that it was at the end of the third day we reached London. We remained but ten days there, while Mr. Dawson attended to some pressing business, and then went to Paris, where we spent two weeks, after which we travelled over the continent, returning to England in the autumn.

"Mr. Dawson took a furnished villa at Croyden, where we settled down to as happy a country life as ever was enjoyed by mortals. It was a fool's paradise, my dear son, but as I did not know it then, and as the ignorance of bliss was mine, I was happy as a fool in paradise. I had a letter from our pastor to the rector of the Croyden church, and I united with the congregation, and was called on by the rector's family and by the principal people of my own rank in life.

"After we were completely settled, my dear mother came and spent a month with us, and I gave tea parties and dinners in her honor, and some of our neighbors did the same in return, and all this made her proud and happy. Seeing how pleased she was, my husband, who was very, very kind indeed, besought her to remain with us for good, and keep the lodging-house at St. Margaret's only for our summer resort. But my mother was very wise, or thought herself so, and she shook her head, and said, as well as she loved us and as sure as she felt of our love, she would not put our mutual affection to so severe a test as to take up her permanent abode with us.

"So at the end of her visit my dear mother went back to her country home, to console herself with the anticipation of our promised sojourn with her the next summer, and with stories of our prosperity and happiness told over social cups of tea to sympathizing neighbors.

"It was a few days after my mother's departure that an incident happened, very trivial in itself, yet of immense significance to me, if I could only have understood it aright! I was sitting with my husband in the little bookroom that I dignified with the name of library. The morning papers had just been brought in and laid upon the table. My husband had taken up the *Times,* and was busy over its columns. I took up the *Morning Post,* because it was a gossiping sort of paper, full of society news. Glancing down its columns, my eyes fell upon a paragraph that interested me because it contained a name made familiar to my mind as that of one of my husband's references. And I spoke up impulsively:

" 'Here is something about one of your friends, John dear,' I said.

"He laid down his paper and looked up (he was always as polite to me as if I had been some other lady and not his wife), and I read out the paragraph. Oh! I remember it, as I have good cause to remember it, word for word. It was this:

" 'A letter from Bagdad states that Lady John Daw is now in that city, in company with Prince Olgus of Schwartzburg. It is said that Lord John Daw has filed a petition for divorce, which will come before the House of Lords at the next session of Parliament. His lordship is now supposed to be traveling in the North of England.'

"'That is your friend,' I said. 'Oh! what a dreadful thing for him to have such a—*shameful* domestic trouble as this! And you never mentioned it to me!'

"'No, my sinless dove! Why should I have sullied your pure ears with such an impure story? I am very sorry you have chanced to read it. Never speak of it again, dear love, but forget it as soon as possible,' said my husband, and he got up and took the paper from me and left the room.

"The subject was never resumed between us. We had a very happy winter. Owing to the letter from the rector of St. Margaret's to the rector of Croyden we were well received in the neighborhood.

"Early in the ensuing summer we went down to my mother's house at St. Margaret's. There, two months later, *you* came to be my comfort through all the trouble that speedily followed.

"Before I was able to travel it became necessary for my husband to go to London on pressing business. He went, leaving me comfortable and happy in my mother's home. I did not grieve at the parting, which I thought would last but a week at the farthest. And, besides, I was so blest in the possession of my son, and the presence of my mother, and the assured love of my husband. No prevision warned me that our parting was forever.

"We had but two mails a week at St. Margaret's, but letters came to me by every mail; full of affection they were, for he *did* love me more than life—more than that which is better than life.

"The first cloud which floated over the sunshine of my happiness came not through him, but through the failing health of my dear mother. She was forty years old only, and should have lived thirty or forty years longer, but one day, when you were about two months

old, and had just begun to know us and crow with pleasure at the sight of either of us, and when I was expecting a letter by every mail to announce the speedy arrival of my husband to escort me and the child back to London, my poor mother was struck down with paralysis. All in an instant, without a moment's warning, she was changed as by a thunderbolt from the active, stirring, sprightly woman to the perfectly helpless invalid, without even the power to move or speak.

"I was overwhelmed with grief, and my husband, to whom I communicated the sad news, was full of sympathy and consideration. He wrote back, saying that I was to remain with my mother as long as she should need me, and that, as these cases were sometimes apt to be tedious, and I might have to spend the winter with her, and, if she should live to recover, the summer also, as usual, he would give up the furnished house at Croyden, and come down to St. Margaret's.

"Well!—No, it was *not* well! His previsions were verified. My mother lay for weeks and months as a living, conscious soul within a dead body. It was more horrible than anything you can conceive. I cannot dwell upon it.

"In due time my boxes containing all my personal effects arrived at our house, having been sent all the way from Croyden to St. Margaret's by carrier's wagons; and a letter came from my husband, saying that he should follow them soon.

"But he never came, and he never wrote again. I watched for the stage-coach, and I watched for the mail; but coach after coach came in without my husband; mail after mail, without a letter.

"At first, though I was vexed and disappointed, I was not anxious—some little unexpected matter of business

might have delayed him—a letter might have miscarried —such things would happen. I was patient and reasonable for a few days.

"But when more than a week had passed away without my seeing or hearing from him I grew very anxious and unhappy. All my letters to him had been directed to the General Postoffice, London; to be left till called for. I knew no other address; but I wrote by every mail, imploring him to write, or if he were disabled by sickness from doing so, to get some one else to write for him, and to relieve my great anxiety.

"No answer came to these appeals.

"And in the meantime dear mother was sinking slowly but surely. In December the doctor said that the end could not be far off. I used to borrow the London *Times* from the rectory for the one purpose of reading the death notices, for I was haunted with a terrible suspicion that my husband's silence was due to his extreme illness that might end in death, the only notice of which I might get through the columns of the *Times*, as there might be no one near him to write to me; and then in conjunction with this thought, it occurred to me, for the first time, to reflect how strange it was that I did not know any member of my husband's family, that he had never spoken to me of any of his relatives, and that when I wished to know whether he was living or dead I had to watch the newspaper even for the least chance of getting news; so in fear and trembling I looked down the death-column every day, and not finding his name there, felt present relief—until one day it occurred to me that he might have died and his death might have been advertised very soon after the writing of his last letter and before I had had time to grow uneasy.

"Then I became utterly miserable. I still wrote by

every mail, and still without receiving any response. My troubles must have been insupportable but for the comfort I found in you, my child."

Here Roderick took his mother's hand and pressed it warmly, saying:

"It is well, dear mother, that you had some comfort in your son then, you have had so little lately; but I will henceforth be more to you than I have ever been! I will indeed! Better days shall come to both of us."

"Heaven grant the better days, dear boy; but for the rest—you have *always* been my consolation for every trouble," said the lady, earnestly, and then she resumed her story:

"One day, while looking over the *Times,* after I had read down the death roll, my eyes fell upon another paragraph that immediately arrested my attention because it contained the name of the only friend of my husband whom I had ever heard him mention—the unfortunate Lord John Daw, whose guilty wife had left him and was traveling through the East with a German prince.

"The paragraph was to this effect:

" 'We are happy to announce that Lord John Daw is recovering from the long and dangerous illness which has prostrated him for so many weeks at his seat, Lowater in Leicestershire. It is said that the disappointment and mortification incident upon the failure of his lordship's suit for divorce from his lady upon the ground of her infidelity, which was tried in the House of Lords in the beginning of this session, and which was met and defeated by counter charges on her ladyship's part, was the cause of the mental and physical prostration that has brought his lordship so near the brink of

the grave. Lord John Daw purposes to come up to London as soon as he shall be able to travel.'

"I do not pretend, my dear Roderick, to give you the precise words in which this paragraph was couched. I give them only as near as I can remember. I had thought, on seeing first the name of Lord John Daw, that I would ask our rector for his lordship's address and write to him to inquire if he knew aught of my husband's whereabouts; but when I thought of the trouble and illness from which he was suffering, I felt that it would be both wrong and useless for me to annoy him with a letter from a perfect stranger.

"However, my mother's condition, which had occupied all my time that was not given to my child, now also absorbed nearly all my thoughts. I said she had been sinking slowly for weeks. She had lost speech, motion, and the power of swallowing solid food. Now, at last, she lost the power of swallowing liquids, and from this time she sank rapidly, and died about the middle of December.

"Although her death had been expected from the first day of her attack, and approached so slowly, yet when it came, it was a crushing blow to me! But for you, my dear boy, I should have died then! All my former life seemed to have fallen away in the loss of my mother!

"Yet, after the funeral, I had to rouse myself. I wrote to my husband of what had happened, and told him that I should have to give up the house and go away to him, and wished to know when I should come; but, as was expected, I got no answer.

"The personal property of my mother had been settled on me. I selected certain mementoes of her that we had possessed in my father's lifetime, and then I

sold all the rest of the furniture, gave up the house, and with the money that I had raised, took my child and travelled to London in search of my husband.

"We travelled by stage-coach, and were three days on the journey. My mother had a distant cousin, a widow of the name of Fletcher, who kept a bookstore in the Strand, and with whom she corresponded about once a year. She had been duly invited to my wedding, indeed, but she did not take the long jonrney to attend, as no one expected that she would.

"It was the afternoon of the third day when we arrived in London, and I went directly to my cousin's store. I found her behind the counter, an enormously stout woman with a fresh, healthy complexion and gray hair, and apparently about fifty years of age. We had never met before, so I had to introduce myself; though I need not have done so, as she exclaimed:

" 'Yes, you are Rachel's own daughter! I should have known you anywhere by your likeness to your mother! And that is your baby? And where is your husband?'

"Fortunately for me, before I was called upon to explain she had noticed my black dress, and she broke out into ejaculations of surprise and dismay, with—

" 'Great patience! You are in the deepest mourning! I hope—I hope—I hope you have not lost him!'

"Then I broke down and cried bitterly, and between tears and sobs told her of my poor mother's illness and death. She took the baby from my arms and led me into her back parlor and made me sit down in the arm-chair by the fire, while she called a girl from below stairs to come up and mind the shop. She made me a cup of tea, and while I was drinking it she tried to comfort me in every way her kind heart could suggest.

"But when I told her all my troubles, and how

strangely I had lost trace of my husband, she became too much alarmed to be able to reassure me. She talked of the strange disappearances of people in London—some of whom had fallen into the hands of the press-gang and had been carried off to sea before they could advise their friends of their seizure, and some of whom had evidently fallen among thieves and been mysteriously made way with by being sunk into the waters of the river, or buried in the depths of some cellar.

"By the time she had nearly driven me into hysterics she desisted in her dark hints and began to express a hope that none of these misfortunes had happened to Mr. Dawson, who was evidently no stranger to London and its ways, and knew what was what, too well to come to sorrow in that sort of way.

"She was very good to me. She said that of course I must stop with her while pursuing my search, and asked me where she should send for my trunks. I told her, and she called a porter from the street and dispatched him on the errand.

"My old cousin lived alone with one servant.

"Her son and daughter were both married and living in another part of the city. They had got the emigration fever, she said, and talked about going to America, and if they concluded to go, she should accompany them.

"All this talk went on while I was taking my tea, and after I had finished it she showed me upstairs to a neat room over the shop, and advised me to go to bed.

"I followed her counsel, for both myself and my child were worn out with our three days' travel by coach.

"We both slept, with the roar of the noisiest street in London below us—the roar that ceased not day nor night, and that certainly would have kept us awake had we been less prostrated.

"In the morning, immediately after breakfast, I asked my cousin if she could tell me where Lord John Daw lived—for, as he was the son of a duke, I supposed his residence would be known to everybody.

"'Lord John Daw!' cried my cousin, with a look of horror. 'Whatever do *you,* an honest woman, want of him, I'd like to know?'

"'He was my husband's friend, and I wish to inquire of him if he knows anything about Mr. Dawson's whereabouts,' I answered.

"'Don't you go anigh him, child! He's one of the notoriousest villyans in all London!'

"'I knew that he had been very unfortunate in his domestic relations, but I never thought that he was wicked,' I deprecatingly answered.

"'Wicked people is mostly unfortunate! You may take your davy for that! Don't you go anigh that grand villyan if you don't want to lose your character!'

"'Why, what has Lord John done?' I asked.

"'What *hain't* he done?' she sharply demanded; 'he done everything but murder! and I don't doubt he'd have done that if he hadn't been afeared of his neck being stretched! What has he done, indeed?' cried the old lady, working herself up to a fit of indignation; 'he's druv his lady to run away from him, and then he sneaked away from London, and after a while turned up, living under a false name with a young woman as he passed off for his wife! And he never would have been found out, neither, if my lady's attorneys hadn't kept spies on his track. So when his divorce trial came on at the House of Lords it was squelched!'

"'I am sure my husband knew nothing of this wickedness, or he never would have called Lord John Daw his friend.'

"'Well, maybe not. But all the town knows it now. Don't you go nigh him, child.'

"'No, of course I will not,' I sighed.

"But I resolved to go to Croyden and inquire of the rector there, if he, or any one in the neighborhood, could tell me anything about my missing husband. So I left the child in the care of my cousin and started for Croyden. It was several hours' journey by stage-coach, and it was midday before I alighted and started to walk to the rectory. It was snowing hard.

"I reached the rectory, covered with snow, and rang the bell.

"A smart servant girl opened the door. I had known her well in the months that I had lived in Croyden, and so I said:

"'How do you do, Ann?' in a friendly tone.

"But the girl stared at me in an insolent manner, and instead of inviting me in, held the door in her hand; and when I asked to see the rector she answered curtly that her master was not in.

"Then I gave her my card, and requested her to take it to her mistress.

"She carried it into the parlor, which was just on the right of the hall in which I was standing, and as she left the door open, I heard every word of the colloquy that ensued.

"Said the girl: 'It is Mrs. Dawson, ma'am, asking to see you.'

"Said the lady: 'Tell that person, Ann, that I cannot receive Mrs. Dawson.'

"And the girl came out with the message, returning my card.

"I left the rectory door amazed and dismayed. It was snowing faster and faster.

"Yet through the snow I walked to the houses of several of my former friends, *always* to be rebuffed as I had been at the rectory.

"Full of consternation and wonder, I went to the stage office and remained there until the coach started for London.

"It was dark when I reached my cousin's house in the Strand. I did not tell her of the cruel rebuffs with which I had been met. I merely told her that I had not succeeded in gaining news of my husband.

"She sympathized with me, and I took my child and went upstairs and went to bed. How peaceful is the presence of a sleeping child! With mine nestling on my bosom I almost forgot my woes.

"Early the next morning I started out on a second quest—this time to Lincoln's Inn Fields, in search of Mr. Richard Daly, who had been my husband's second reference.

"The distance was not long. I soon reached the place, and after some inquiry found the house and was shown up two pairs of stairs to Mr. Richard Daly's office.

"I was shown into an ante-room, or outer office, where two young men were sitting, each on a high stool at a high desk, busily writing.

"I inquired of the nearest one to the door, if I could see Mr. Richard Daly.

"He replied: 'Not just yet, as he has a client in with him. Take a seat, ma'am, if you please.'

"I sat down and waited. In a few minutes a gentleman came in, who, from the style of his talk to the clerks, seemed to belong to the office. His first question was:

"'Have you done engrossing that deed for Lord John Daw?'

"'I have almost finished it, sir.'

"'Hurry up with it, then! I shall have to take it down to my Lord at Lowater this morning.'

"'If you please, sir, his lordship is here.'

"'Here? In town?'

"'Lord John Daw is here, in the office, sir.'

"'Here! In this office! Lord John Daw!'

"'Yes, sir, closeted with Mr. Daly at this present speaking.'

"'Strange! It must be something very sudden and important that brings his lordship to our office! He has never honored us with a visit before! How long has he been here?'

"'Full half an hour, sir, I should say.'

"'Something very sudden, or he would have sent for some of us to wait on his lordship at home. Ah! here he comes, I fancy.'

"The door of the inner office opened and two gentlemen came out together.

"One of them, who seemed to be obsequiously attending upon the other, was saying:

"'The documents shall be sent to your lordship within two hours.'

"They were crossing the room and came into my full view, as the other answered:

"'Be punctual for once, Daly! I start for St. Margaret's this evening.'

"THE LAST SPEAKER WAS MY HUSBAND!

"There could be no doubt—no *possible* doubt of that! And as he spoke he passed out of the room, still obsequiously attended by Mr. Daly.

"For a minute I was so paralyzed by the discovery

that I could not move, or even think. I sat there, feeling petrified. Then I sprang up so suddenly that I overturned my chair and startled both the clerks, as I ran out of the room and down the stairs to overtake and speak to him.

"He had not recognized me, I was sure, because he had not once looked toward me. I reached the foot of the lowest flight of stairs and the street door just in time to see him drive off in his cab.

"Mr. Daly, who stood bowing on the sidewalk when the cab drove off, now turned into the house, and—no doubt from seeing my extreme agitation—stared at me.

" 'That gentleman was Lord John Daw?' I said, as I leaned up against the side of the hall for support, for I was trembling so that I could not stand.

"Mr. Daly stared longer, and then answered hesitatingly:

" 'Yes, Miss, that gentleman was Lord John Daw.'

" 'Would you be so kind as to give me his address?' I asked.

"Daly hesitated so long that I hastened to add:

" 'I am Mrs. Dawson, of St. Margaret's. I wish to ask news of my husband, who has been missing for some months. He was a friend of Lord John Daw's.'

"Daly gathered his lips together for a long whistle, but suppressed it as he gazed at me and muttered:

" 'Mrs. Dawson—of St. Margaret's? Oh! Ah! Yes! It may save his lordship a journey in his weak state. Yes, madam, I will give you his address.'

"And he took a blank card and pencil from his pocket and wrote it.

" 'Grove Lodge, Piccadilly,' I read, when he had handed me the card. 'Is that far from here, sir? I do not know London at all.'

"'Yes, it is some distance. Allow me, madam. Step into this room and sit down. I will send for a cab,' he said, throwing open a door on the right that led into a room occupied by one gray-haired old man, in a rusty suit of black, who sat writing at a high desk in the lightest corner, between two windows.

"I thankfully accepted his kindness, and sat down to wait. He went out to order the cab, and he sent me in a glass of wine and a biscuit—all of which I thought unusual attentions to a stranger, but which I partly understood as being done in the interest of Lord John Daw. Ah, Heaven! The dreadful truth was beginning to break upon my mind, though I resisted it with all my strength.

"When the cab was at the door, Mr. Daly himself came and put me in it and told the driver where to go.

"I had plenty of time for reflection as I drove on. Reflection! Good Heaven! to what end did my reflections tend? That the gentleman I had seen at Daly's office was the one who under the name of John Dawson had married me, was certain; yet he was known here as Lord John Daw! And Lord John Daw was known to have a wife living abroad and was accused of having——

'That way madness lay!'

"I dared not pursue the thought! The suspense I felt was as the grip of an iron hand upon my heart.

"The distance was long and the old horse was slow, so that it was near noon when we drew up before Grove Lodge, which was at the other end of Piccadilly.

"It was an imposing building of dark stone, square in form, and with armorial carvings over the portals. It

stood back from the street, and a semi-circular carriage-drive led from the iron gates to and from the house.

"We drove up to the stately doors, which were reached by several stone steps.

"I alighted and ascended these steps and knocked. All the pulses of my body seemed to stand still while I waited for admittance.

"I doubted whether I should be admitted, until an inspiration came to me, which I resolved to follow.

"The door was opened by a pompous looking servant in livery.

" 'Is Lord John Daw at home?' I inquired.

" 'I don't know, mum; I'll see. What name?' inquired the man in his turn.

" 'Tell his lordship that it is a person from Mr. Daly's office; his lordship was expecting one,' I replied, telling the truth, for I *had* come from Daly's, from whose office my lord *was* expecting some one, though not me exactly.

" 'Sit down here, mum, and I'll see if his lordship is at home,' said the man, showing me into a small waiting-room on the left of the hall, where I sat down, or rather, dropped down into a chair, for I was ill with apprehension of—I hardly knew *what* confirmation of my worst fears.

" 'Please—give me—a glass of water,' I said, for I feared I should faint.

"The man brought it to me, and then went on his errand.

"I drank the water, sat down the glass, and summoned all my fortitude to support me in this severe ordeal.

"What would be the result of my interview with Lord Daw? He had married me under the name of John Dawson. And he had a wife living on the continent!

If this were so, what was I? What was my child? I *would* not think! I pushed off thought!

"It *could* not be, I said to my aching heart—it *could* not be that my husband had so deeply deceived me; and not only me, but my mother, and our minister, and all our old friends. I had not been married in a corner; I had not run away to be married privately. Such marriages I had always been taught to consider as disreputable and dangerous, actually exposing the foolish girl who should venture upon one to deception and dishonor.

"But mine had not been such.

"Mine had been solemnized in our parish church, by our own minister, and in the presence of all our friends, and with the consent and blessing of my mother.

"How, then, could ruin come to my marriage—such ruin as threatened me and my child? It could not! It could not! There must be some mistake! *I might* have been deceived in imagining this Lord John Daw to be identical with my missing husband. I should find out my mistake when I should come to face his lordship, and then I could explain my intrusion by telling him that I wished to see him to inquire after my husband, as *he* had been one of Mr. Dawson's references.

"But—on the other hand—if there were *no* mistake? If—I *would* not think any longer! If I continued to do so I should go crazy!

"My distracted reflections were happily interrupted by the re-entrance of the footman, who said:

" 'His lordship is at home, mum, and will see you. Please walk up.' "

CHAPTER IX

CONFRONTED

"THROUGH lofty corridors and suites of sumptuous apartments I followed the footman, until finally he paused before a pair of highly polished black walnut doors, opened one leaf, and announced:

"'The lady from Daly's, my lord,' and closed it behind me.

"I found myself standing in a handsomely appointed library, at the upper end of which, at a table covered with books and papers, sat a gentleman writing.

"Trembling, I walked up the room.

"He arose as I approached, saying:

"'You come from my solicitor, madam. I had scarcely expected to see a lady on this business.'

"I threw aside my veil and stood before him. He looked at me for an instant as if uncertain of my identity—for I suppose, indeed, that trouble had already changed me—and then turning ghastly pale he dropped into his chair again, exclaiming:

"'Ruth! *You* here! Great Heavens, Ruth!'

"I could not answer him. I could not even speak, or withdraw my eyes from his face, but stood leaning on the table for support and looking at him. How blanched and wasted he was! Was it from sickness, sorrow or remorse? His elbow rested on the table, and his pallid forehead was bowed upon his emaciated hand. I was very sorry for him.

"'Ruth! Ruth!' he said at last, 'what has brought you here?'

"'To ask two questions: Are you Mr. John Dawson

or Lord John Daw? and am I your wife or—what?' I inquired.

"'You are my wife! In the sight of Heaven, Ruth, you are my wife!' he answered, excitedly.

"'How many wives, then, does Heaven allow a man to have at a time?' I could not help asking.

"'Ruth! Ruth! for pity's sake, do not mock me! I am a sinful and unhappy man! But not so sinful and much more unhappy than you know!'

"'I am very sorry for you,' I breathed.

"'Oh! Ruth, if you knew all you would indeed pity me! I never meant to wrong you, child! Heaven knows I never did! When I married you I thought I was free to do so. When I discovered my mistake I would have kept the discovery from you until I could have righted that wrong, and when the power to do that was taken from me forever, disappointment and grief and remorse threw me down upon a bed of illness, from which I have only just arisen. I have come up to town, not to make full atonement to you for the past—for that can never be made—but to do all that I can under the circumstances. That was the business which took me to Daly's office this morning, and I intended going down to St. Margaret's this afternoon. Oh! Ruth, I had intended to keep all this miserable business from your knowledge; but since you have found out the very worst, you should know *all*—all the palliating circumstances that led to my fatal error. Ruth, hear my defence!'

"'I *wish* to hear it,' I faltered; but my strength was failing, the floor seemed sinking under my feet, the walls turning.

"'Ruth; Ruth!' he cried, and in an instant caught me up to prevent me from falling, and laid me on the lounge, and knelt beside me.

"'That will do. I have not fainted. I am not going to faint,' I said.

"He brought me a glass of wine, but I declined to take it.

"'I *do* wish to hear what you have to say in explanation of—of—your marriage with me,' I said, rising with difficulty and seating myself on a chair, for already my husband seemed to have become a stranger, with whom it was not proper that I should be at ease, or otherwise than formal and distant.

"'Are you ready to hear me now, Ruth?' he inquired, as he took his own chair again, at a little distance from mine, as if he, too, recognized that a wall had risen between us.

"'Yes, if you please; I am—very anxious to hear—anything that may—excuse you. Oh! in spite of all!—in spite of the fact that this is our last—our very last meeting on earth—I cannot *bear* to think ill of you! I long, I *long* to think well of you.'

"'God bless you, Ruth! but before I enter upon my miserable story, tell me, my child, what brought you up to London and to the knowledge of our misfortune? I see that you are in deep mourning, and I gather from that that you have lost your mother.'

"'My mother is in heaven. I have not lost *her;* but you are here in the room with me and I have lost you! Oh, what a difference!'

"He winced at this. I had hurt him, though I did not mean to do so.

"'Tell me,' he repeated, 'what brought you to London?'

"'Anxiety to find *you.* I had not heard from you for two months.'

"'I was stricken down with illness, and unable to write or send to you.'

"Yes, I understand that *now,* but I did not *then;* so, when my mother passed away, I gave up the lease of her house, and came here to seek Lord John Daw or Mr. Richard Daly—your two references—to get news of you. I was in Mr. Daly's office when you passed through the room on your way out this morning.'

"'You were? I did not notice any one!'

"'I sat in a corner, and my veil was down; but I saw you pass and recognized you. I heard the men there call you Lord John Daw. I knew from newspaper report something of Lord John Daw's history. I asked his address, obtained it, and came here to satisfy myself. Well! I have done so! You married me under circumstances that require explanation and defense, and now I am waiting to hear them.'

"I believe my forbearance wounded him worse than reproachful words could have done.

"He entered upon his defense, which was a much better one than I had dared to hope; for he proved that when he married me in St. Margaret's Church, in the presence of my mother and of our friends and neighbors, he was acting in as good faith as was any one present, and was as innocent of wrong-doing as I was myself.

"He said:

"'I declare to you, my much wronged darling, that I never knew love until I met you. Years ago, I married, as many young men do, from a superficial admiration of a very beautiful woman. She was the wealthy heiress of a noble family, and all the world said, "What a very suitable match" was ours, although, as was afterward shown, there was no love and only liking on either side.

"'We lived together several years, spending the fashionable season in this house, the Christmas holidays at Lowood, and the rest of the year in other places—in the Highlands, at the seaside, or on the continent. Everywhere my beautiful wife entered freely in society, and was very greatly admired.

"'Yet, withal, I declare that she was not a coquette. Her nature, for good or evil, was too deep and strong for such frivolity. We had, as I said, no "inordinate affection" for each other, yet still we were reasonably happy until——

"'About two years ago, when, at a soirée given in his honor, we met society's great lion of the hour—a German prince who was not only a prince, but a great traveler, explorer and discoverer in the remote regions of the East.

"'Ruth, I assert, upon my honor, that if I had ever loved the woman who bore and dishonored my name, I could not even now speak of her, or of the man who took her from me, with the calmness that you see.

"'As I look back at their fatal acquaintance, which I saw from its commencement, for we were presented to his highness at the same time, I see that it was a case of serpent fascination at first sight.

"'Olgus of Schwartzburg was not young or handsome—he was no Apollo in form, or Adonis in face, that he should have drawn a beautiful, high-born woman out of her senses and out of her sphere; but quite the contrary. He was a tall, dark, rugged, swarthy ruffian of forty-five years, whose long hair and untrimmed beard were silvered here and there; yet, withal, he was as the fabled magnetic mountain to the elegant, graceful, blonde beauty whom he attracted to her destruction.

"'It is said that love is blind and renders its victims

so; but I think that the want of love is often just as obscuring to the mental vision. I think it must have been my want of love and of jealousy that made me so utterly blind to what soon became apparent to all our circle.

" 'First of all, on the very evening the mutual fascination between the "lion" and the lady, the "beauty" and the "beast," was observed and commented upon by all who saw them together.

" 'Next, my lady gave a garden party in honor of the lion, and from that time they met daily, for he was a frequent morning visitor at this house, and she made it a point to be present at every party given to him, of which there was one somewhere every night in the week except Sundays.

" 'This went on for weeks and months until the last of the season, and still, Ruth, though all London was ringing with her name in connection with his, I was blind and deaf to what was passing around me, until, one fatal morning, when we were ready to leave London for Lowood, it was discovered that the lion and the lady had gone off together.

" 'Yes, Ruth, *she,* a bishop's daughter, the idol of society, a wife and a mother, had left her sphere, her home, her husband and infant son, our only child, not then a year old, to share the life of a wild adventurer, a royal ruffian, never handsome, no longer young, and who had nearly lapsed into barbarism from his long association with savages.

" 'Of all the sensations society had ever felt, that was, perhaps, the severest—that "Beauty and the Beast," as they were called, had fled together! Not her worst enemy had ever dreamed that her ladyship's caprice could carry her as far as that.

" 'As for myself, my pride was deeply wounded. I

placed my case in the hands of one of the most eminent legal firms in the city, with instructions to collect evidence and prepare the petition for divorce, which I meant to bring before the House of Lords at the next meeting of Parliament.

" 'Then I placed my child in the care of my married sister, shut up my town-house, and left London for the continent.

" 'I dropped the name that my lady had made a byword in English circles throughout Europe, and I kept only one of the unnecessary middle names with which my sponsors had liberally endowed me. I stand in "Burke" as John Dawson Danmore Daw. A traveled over the continent as John Dawson. I avoided all fashionable resorts for fear of meeting people who would recognize me under my chosen name.

" 'Now, Ruth, comes an incident that was destined to deceive me, to our ruin. I was in Paris during the month of March, about eight months after the elopement, and was about to start for England, for Parliament had met and I was anxious to push my petition for divorce—when, the night before the journey, I took up a copy of the London *Times* and read *this* paragraph—with what emotions you may judge'

"Here Lord John Daw unlocked a drawer in his table, drew from it a newspaper and passed it over to me, saying:

" 'Read that marked item.'

"I read it, and I remembered it, word for word. It was this:

" 'It will be seen in another column in the dispatches from our consul at Alexandria, that news has been received of the massacre of the exploring party headed

by Olgus of Schwartzburg, who, while crossing the Great Desert and near the Oasis of Onokari, were surprised by a large party of Bedouins and cut off to a man. Among the victims was the misguided and unfortunate Lady John Daw, whose elopment with the famous explorer caused such a scandalous sensation last winter.'

"When I had finished this paragraph I turned to the 'foreign news,' referred to in the first column, and read the full details of the massacre, with time, place, and circumstance minutely recorded; even to the plunder of the dead body of the English lady, and the carrying off the jewels that had been carefully concealed about her person.

"'Well, Ruth,' said Lord John Daw, when I had finished reading, 'what do you think now? Was I justified in believing myself to be a free man?'

"'You were justified,' I answered.

"'And you forgive me?' he asked.

"'I have never accused you,' I replied.

"'Ruth, I went to England the next day, and on my arrival in London my first work was to withdraw my petition for divorce. Death had done the business more effectually than the House of Lords could have done it.

"'And then I left London and wandered over England, still under my middle name of Dawson, for I was still sore on the subject of my domestic troubles, which I heard everywhere discussed.

"'It was in May of that year that I first saw your sweet face, Ruth, and first knew what it was to love. This was one day when the stage had set me down at the principal hotel of Bolton, where I had to wait some hours for the coach across country that I wanted to go

by. After my early dinner at the hotel I went to the town hall to while away the time at a charity fair that I understood was in progress there. I saw you, Ruth, at one of the tables, and in your face received such a revelation of beauty, purity and peace as soothed and almost healed my sick soul. I did not get the chance to speak to you, for you were surrounded and busy waiting on customers, and I had to hurry away to catch my coach.

"'I found time, however, to inquire about you from the landlord of the hotel, who informed me that your mother was the widow of the late Dr. Duane, and that she kept a lodging-house during the season at the neighboring village of St. Margaret's.

"'Then I resolved to go to St. Margaret's before the commencement of the regular season, and secure all the rooms your mother had to let, for the whole summer, that I might have the opportunity of forming your acquaintance, and seeing whether your character and disposition corresponded with your countenance and manner.

"'I was still under the name of John Dawson, which was not an alias, but my own legal name, so far as it went. I engaged nearly the whole of the widow's house for the season; spent the whole summer among you, won the esteem and confidence of all your people, and wooed, won and married you, meaning at some future time, not then far distant, to give you the pleasant surprise of hearing from my lips my own real rank and your true title.

"'But, oh, great Heaven! how adversely everything turned out. Oh, Ruth! I was very rudely awakened from my dream of happiness! We had returned from our wedding tour and were living at our pretty villa at Croyden, where I chose that we should remain incog.

for a few months, because I did not like to reappear in London so soon after the scandal of the past spring, and we were expecting your mother to visit us, when one morning—do you remember?—you handed me the *Morning Post,* and pointed out a paragraph that you said concerned a friend of mine—Lord John Daw.

"'It was a paragraph that contained the death warrant of my peace! It was the very first inkling of intelligence that I had yet received of the rumor that my wife was still living. You remember that it stated that Lady John Daw had been seen in Bagdad, in company with the German prince.

"You remember I took the paper and left the room. I did so to conceal my agitation. I did not believe the story, but still it disturbed me; and, ah, Heaven! before many days the rumor of Lady John's continued existence was confirmed.

"'But she was no longer with Prince Olgus of Schwartzburg—*his* bones were bleaching on the Great Sahara Desert; but she was the wife (?) of an Arab chief, who had bought her of her Bedouin captor, who had not murdered her, as was reported, but who had carried her beauty off to the best market. Such was the truth brought home to us by some of our returning missionaries.'

"'But why, oh why, when you had made this discovery of your wife's existence, and knew that our union was illegal and sinful, oh, *why* did you not part with me then at once?' I demanded, for I could not bear to think of him as doing wilful wrong.

"'My dear,' he gently replied, 'our union was illegal, but not sinful; that I utterly deny. What though my false wife were still living? Was she not at the antipodes, the companion of a heathen, and as dead to me,

yea verily, more dead to me than if the sands of the Sahara covered her body? Why did I not part with you? I would not. To have done so would have been a cruel and useless sacrifice—at least it seemed so to me then.

"'I had done you all the evil that you could suffer at my hands. You were destined to become a mother. Should I send you back to your native village with a blighted name? Or, should I place you among strangers, with a broken heart? No, Ruth; if my soul's salvation had been lost by my silence, and my continued personal care of you, it should have gone to eternal perdition for your sake.

"'Let me go on, Ruth. Let me tell my miserable story out. I kept all papers containing the least mention of Lord John Daw and of his domestic troubles from your sight. Your mother came to visit us, and you were very happy in her company—happier still in the preparations you were making for the little stranger you expected.

"'Could I ruin that happiness by telling you, or even letting you suspect the miserable truth? No, Ruth, no. I continued to live with you in comparative obscurity under the name of Dawson; and I re-instituted measures for my divorce from the false woman who had done all she could to wreck my life.

"'Parliament met again in February, and my petition was once more brought before the House of Lords; but by reason of great pressure of other business, it was not taken up till April.

"'Meanwhile I took you down to your mother's house that you might be far from the scene of this suit. I remained with you there until after our babe was born, because it was not necessary for me to be in London.

"'And now, do you remember the morning when I suddenly received a letter, recalling me to the city?'

"'Oh, too well,' I answered.

"'That letter was from my solicitor, informing me that the attorney who acted for Lady John Daw had brought counter charges against me, in resistance of my suit.

"'I left you and hastened up to London. I found affairs much worse than my wildest fears had anticipated. My lady had left, or had placed her interests in very skilful, not to say unscrupulous hands.

"'I found that I had been placed under espionage ever since I had taken the initial steps toward my first petition for a divorce. I will not torture myself or you by going into particulars.

"'I remained in London, and struggled hard for my freedom—but in vain. It was that countercharge that killed my suit and nearly killed me; for when my cause was lost, and the decision made against me, I suddenly fell ill, and lay for eight weeks a helpless invalid.

"'As soon as I was able to do so I sat up in bed and wrote a few lines telling you that I had been ill, but that I should be with you as soon as I should be able to travel so far.'

"'I never got the letter,' I said.

"'No, for you must have left St. Margaret's before my letter could have reached the village. To-day I should have started for that place, had not your unexpected arrival prevented me.'

"'I am glad I saved you the journey. You are not near strong enough yet to undertake so long a one,' I sighed.

"'And now, Ruth, you understand my position. If you had not yourself discovered it, you should never

have known it from me. I should have taken you to some foreign country where the legality of our union could not have been questioned, and we should have lived happily together until death.'

"'Oh, no! Oh, no! You would never have done that! You, a Christian man, would never have so deceived me to my own destruction and to yours,' I burst forth, for—though he was henceforth to be nothing to me, I *did* want to think the best of him.

"'I should have deceived you to the day of your death, for your peace, and safety, and happiness, Ruth, and the sin, if there were to be sin, would have been mine only, and I should have been willing to bear it for your sake. Have I not told you that I would have periled, nay *lost* my soul for your sake? But now, Ruth, unhappily you know the worst. You know what I would have concealed from you with my life. You know that, by English law, I am bound to a woman who by some other law is now the wife of a barbarian! Knowing the very worst, what have you to say, Ruth? What must be the end of this? I place our fate in your hands. You shall be the arbiter of our destiny. What is it to be, Ruth?'

"And as he spoke he left his chair, sank down by my side, and dropped his head upon my shoulder.

"I could not repel him then. I could hardly speak, for my heart was breaking. Oh, I loved him so much! —but I managed to breathe forth some words like these:

"'We must do our plain duty. We must part here, now and forever! Come; let us be strong and let us say a kind good-by to each other?'

"'Ruth!' he cried, raising his head and looking wild, 'you do not mean it! You cannot be so cruel! so irrational; Ruth, *could* that woman be more entirely lost

and dead to me, in her grave, than she is in that Arab chief's tent?'

"'No,' I admitted, 'she could not.'

"'Then why should her continued existence keep us apart?'

"'Her great sin would not justify *our* sin,' I said.

"'Ruth, it is superstition, not religion, that governs you!' he exclaimed. And then he went over the whole ground again—the cruelty, the injustice, the unreasonableness of the principle that would render the mere existence of that guilty woman in Arabia a bar to our harmless bliss.

"'I cannot argue with you,' I said, as gently as I could—'I cannot answer you at all; yet I know that we must part. Oh, John! this world is *not* the only one to live for!'

"A terrible scene followed. He argued, pleaded, raved, and reproached me by turns. I could not meet his arguments; they *seemed* to be so right and reasonable, yet I knew them to be false and sinful. I could hardly resist his pleading, or bear his reproaches; I know not *how* I withstood him, for oh! I loved him so much and I pitied him so deeply.

"*Indeed* I have no clear remembrance of how I got out of that room, or out of that house. I know I left him in bitter anger against me. When I got back to my old cousin's house I resolved never again to subject myself to the terrible temptation of his presence and his pleadings, and I rejoiced that he did not know my address and would never be able to find me in the great wilderness of London.

"To my old cousin that evening I told the whole story, leaving her, at its end, with a much better opinion of Lord John Daw than she had had at the time she formed

her estimate of his character from libelous newspaper reports.

"She agreed with me, however, that I had done quite right in parting with Lord John Daw, at once and forever.

" 'It does seem very hard to bear, under the circumstances, and it almost looks as if he had the right on his side in wanting you to stay with him; but there stands the law of God, and it must not be broken by Christians. But you must not have the trial of meeting him again, honey. It would be too much for flesh and blood to bear. You must go to America along of us.'

" '*Are* you going to America then? *Is* it settled, and *will* you take me with you?' I eagerly inquired, catching at this chance of deliverance.

" 'Yes, we are all going. It was all finally settled this very day. We go in the first packet that sails, and we will be very glad to take you along with us. Why, laws! for that matter, we would be very happy to take all our friends and acquaintances out to that foreign country to keep us from being lonesome and homesick.'

" 'Thank Heaven!' I fervently exclaimed.

"The very next day Mrs. Fletcher began preparations for her voyage by advertising her business for sale. It was not so easily disposed of to advantage, however, and this caused some delay, so that the ship in which we had hoped to sail went without us.

"Other difficulties arose with the other interested parties, so that it was months before we were ready to emigrate.

"In the meantime I kept myself closely hidden from Lord John Daw. I saw carefully worded advertisements in the papers, from time to time, to the effect that if R—h E—n who called at the office of Richard Daly,

Lincoln's Inn Fields, on such a date, would repeat her visit or send her address, she would hear something to her advantage.

"Of course I knew whence they emanated and to what they tended. I cannot say I disregarded them; for I cried over more than one.

"So passed the months until in the early autumn, my cousins having all settled their affairs satisfactorily, we sailed for America in the ship *Phaeton*—having on board Mr. Marry, the English Minister to Washington; Mr. Moore, the Irish poet, and other gentlemen and some ladies.

"We had a very slow passage, and lay becalmed for many days. We finally landed at Norfolk early in November, and from Norfolk we went to Washington, our destination, by stage.

"There is little to tell of our residence in the new capital. My cousins entered into the building speculations in their small way, and, like too many others, lost nearly all their little capital, and finally emigrated to Kentucky, where they have, in fifteen years, redeemed their fortunes and grown rich.

"I declined their invitation to go with them and share their fortunes in the West, and decided to remain here. The truth is, my dear, that in my cousin's house, where the two families and the old mother lived together, forming a very large household, I was a sort of unpaid upper servant, having the whole care and labor of the establishment, without wages, and with the name of a dependant on their charity. So, though they were very kind to me, I decided not to go with them.

"I sought out a home for myself and you away from the fever-breeding marshes of the city, and I found it

here, in this very house, where I have lived for fifteen years. You were then five years old.

"I put out a little card at the gate, to the effect that I would take in plain sewing, and soon got enough of it, and in time I got all the custom of the college students, in mending and darning for them. And here I have been content, if not happy.

"Soon I put you, Roderick, in the parish school, and it was your own talent and industry that won for you there the approbation of your masters, and finally gained your admission into the college, from which you have graduated with honor.

"As to Lord John Daw. Of course, I have known for years of his residence in Washington; but he must have been there a long time before I did know it, for I never discovered the fact until about a year after the departure of my cousins, when, in an old newspaper that came around a parcel of work, I casually saw his name in connection with some real estate transfers.

"It gave me a great shock and brought back all the old woe for a while; but I got over it, as I had got over harder things. Since that I have seen and heard his name occasionally; but we have never met, even in public; for this obscure cottage in the northwest of Georgetown is in every way too far removed from the sphere of 'the millionaire lord' to render our meeting likely, or even possible.

"His name, written or spoken, had ceased to disturb my heart until to-day, when the amazing announcement was made to me that *he,* Lord John Daw, my once supposed husband and your father, had unconsciously accepted the application of his own unconscious son to become his confidential secretary. Then the story so long withheld from you, and designed to be told you

only on your majority or on my death, had to be told. You have it now—the whole truth—and if I have not repeated conversations and writings literally word for word, I have reported their true substance; for, as I told you this history, my mind seemed so to lapse back into the past that I seemed to live, act and suffer, to speak and to hear, as I did then; and so, in a half trance, I have reproduced whole scenes in a way that fills me with wonder.

"Now, Roderick, it is for you to judge whether you will accept this situation in the house of Lord John Daw, or decline it, and also whether you will reveal to him the close relationship between you or leave him still in ignorance," concluded the lady.

"What would you have me to do, mother, dear?" inquired the young man, who had listened to the story with so many conflicting emotions of grief, wrath, pity, and wonder that he could not yet bring his thoughts and feelings into sufficient harmony to reason clearly or judge justly.

"I would like you to do precisely as you please in this matter, my dear Roderick."

"Have you really *no* preference one way or the other whether I shall take the situation or decline it—whether I reaveal myself to Lord John Daw as his son or leave him in ignorance of the fact?" persisted the young man.

Ruth Dunn leaned her head upon her hand and reflected for a few minutes, and then replied slowly:

"All this has come so suddenly upon me that I have not had time to give the subject due consideration. Yet —yes, now I think I *have* a wish in the matter."

"What is it, dear mother? Your wish shall be followed, whatever it be, for you are the only one in the

world to whom I owe any duty," said the young man, taking and pressing her hand.

"Nay, nay, you must do as you please—indeed you must."

"But, at least, tell me your wish," earnestly urged the young man.

"I would myself rather never see Lord John Daw again. To do so would be *too* painful," began the lady, when her son eagerly interrupted her.

"Then, mother dear, you never shall. We will have nothing whatever to do with his lordship, and I will write to Mr. Richard Daly and decline the situation."

"No, no, do not be precipitate. I was about to say, though I wish never to meet Lord John Daw myself—yet—now that I have grown old and you have grown up, and are educated, and are—*what you are,* I should like your father to see *you.* I think he would be very proud of you, and take great pleasure in advancing your interests in this world, and I know he could do that successfully," said the mother, looking fondly and proudly on her handsome and manly boy.

"So you wish me to accept the situation, mother dear?"

"Yes, if you like; I think it will be the best opening for your advancement in life."

"And you wish me to tell Lord John Daw who I am?"

"Yes—that is, if you like. I think it would be best. And remember always, Roderick, that Lord John Daw was not so much to be censured as would appear on the surface. He was the victim of 'circumstances over which,' truly, *he* had 'no control.'"

"But suppose, mother dear, he should not believe me to be the son he left in infancy in England twenty years

ago, and has not seen since. Suppose he should repudiate my claim?" suggested Roderick Dunn.

"He could not do that. Your close resemblance to himself in his youth, only you are taller and stouter than he ever was, and your still closer resemblance to his eldest son, whom I have once casually seen, would preclude all doubt on the subject," confidently replied the lady.

"Then suppose he does believe and accept me, what about yourself, dear mother?"

"Oh I? I would live, as heretofore, in retirement. Do not think of me in this affair."

Roderick Dunn looked affectionately at his mother, and though he *did* think of her, and of her mostly, in this affair, he kept his thoughts to himself for the time being.

Presently he inquired:

"Mother, did I understand you to say that *your* father's name was Duane or Dunn?"

"It was Duane, my dear, and when I discovered that my marriage was illegal I resumed my maiden name of Duane as the only one to which I or you had any lawful right."

"How came we to be called Dunn, then, mother? I do not ask out of mere curiosity."

"Because our name of Duane became abbreviated in the lips of the common people into Dunn."

"Oh, I see! just as they call Greenfield 'Grinfil,' and St. John 'Sinjun,' and so on."

"Yes, when you were a boy, your companions called you Rody Dunn, but I did *not* know that your name was spelled so until, years after, I saw it on the college list of students spelled 'Roderick Dunn.' I never cared

about setting the orthography right. I thought the spelling of little consequence. Perhaps I was wrong."

"Well, then, as I wrote to Mr. Daly and applied for the secretaryship under the name of Roderick Dunn, as such I shall present myself to Lord John Daw, and accept the situation, mother dear."

"I am glad you have so decided, Roderick."

"And I am well content that this 'brief' of my name has been thrust upon me by the people and the college, for Dunn conveys no possible memories or associations of ideas to Lord John Daw, as Duane might, which is fortunate, for I do not intend to make my real position known to my lord until I find out for myself what his lordship is made of," said the young man thoughtfully.

"And always remember your duty, Roderick," gently urged the lady.

"I shall endeavor to do so, mother," replied the youth.

This ended the conversation for the time being.

The next morning was that appointed for the interview between Lord John Daw and the candidate for the situation he had to offer.

Mrs. Dunn rose early as usual, put her room in order, and got the breakfast.

Roderick Dunn had been busy all the morning in the little den at the head of the stairs that he called his bedroom. He had kept the door bolted on the inside so that his mother did not see him until she called him to breakfast.

"It is seven o'clock, Roderick, and your appointment is for eleven," she said, when she had rapped.

"All right, mother. There is plenty of time," he answered, as he opened the door.

"Oh, you are quite ready! Then come to breakfast;

it is on the table," she said, leading the way to her own room.

They sat down together.

They had scarcely finished breakfast, however, when a messenger came for Mrs. Dunn—a neighbor's boy—saying that a certain Mrs. Smoot, living half a mile up the road, was very ill and quite alone, and would Mrs. Dunn come and see her.

"Yes, certainly," said the kind-hearted lady, who was always a sure resort in time of trouble to her poor neighbors.

She quickly washed her dishes, tidied her room, and got ready for her charitable errand.

"Roderick," she said to her son, "I shall probably be back before you return from the city; so when you go out, dear, you may leave the key in its usual hiding-place under the front door-step."

"Very well, mother dear, you will find it there."

The lady went away, and the young man's whole aspect changed into one of relief and satisfaction.

"How very fortunate my dear mother is called out just now," he said to himself, "for now I can make all my arrangements without exciting her suspicions or disturbing her mind. And *now,* my lord, if you are not all that my mother believes you to have been—if you *have* deceived her and played her false—*take care of yourself!*"

He shut himself up in his room for another hour, and then, watching his opportunity to go forth unseen, he stole from the house, and locking the door behind him, and hiding the key as he had been told, he went forth to meet his father, and his fate.

CHAPTER X

MYSTERY OF MYSTERIES

RUTH DUNN remained in close attendance upon her sick neighbor until evening, when the opportune arrival of the patient's mother relieved the volunteer nurse of her duties.

It was quite dark when Ruth drew near her own house, and she was rather surprised, on looking up at the windows, to see that they showed no light.

"Roderick is not in yet; he must have returned from the city and gone out again. I'll ask Mrs. Brown," she said, as she felt under the doorstep for the key of the room, and found it there.

She went upstairs and opened her humble apartment and looked around, wondering a little to see everything just as she had left it, and speculating as to whether her son had been absent the whole day, or whether he had returned and gone out again.

"I will ask Mrs. Brown," she said again, as she lighted her lamp, closed the window shutters, and laid off her bonnet.

But she was saved the trouble of going downstairs again, for the slow footsteps of her landlady were heard coming up, and as the door stood wide open Mrs. Brown entered without knocking—a tall, thin, pale woman of about forty-five, with small features, weary-looking, light blue eyes, and scanty light brown hair, which she wore twisted into a small knot at the back of the head, and twisted into two little curls on each hollow temple. She panted and leaned against the jamb of the door as she stood. But what could be expected? She was the

wife of a poor man, and the mother of thirteen children —seven in Heaven, and six on earth.

"Oh! I am so glad to see you, but sorry you tired yourself coming upstairs. I was just going down. Sit in this rocking-chair and rest," said Mrs. Dunn, drawing forward her own favorite seat.

"Been ironing all the whole blessed day, 'cept when I stopped to get meals. Eh? and it is as hot as if it was July instead o' May!" panted the woman, dropping into the rocking-chair and wiping her damp face and neck with her blue checked apron.

"Yes, it has been a warm day for working over a fire," said Ruth, sympathetically, as she handed her palm-leaf fan to her visitor.

"Warm! Oh, I tell you!" exclaimed the latter, fanning herself for a few seconds, and then dropping the fan upon her lap, as if even that exertion was too much for her. "But I didn't come up here to complain of the heat. Complaining never does nobody no good. I came to give you this note, which was left at the door this afternoon by a strange boy," added the visitor, fumbling in the pocket of her faded calico dress, and fetching forth a sealed letter, which she handed to Mrs. Dunn.

Ruth saw at a glance that the missive came from her son, for the superscription was in his handwriting.

"Roderick has not been home, then, since he went out this morning!" she said, as she opened the letter.

"Bless you, no, not as I know of; but I'm afeared some one else has, which I meant to tell you of —however, read your letter, as I see you're anxious to do, and I'll tell you all about it. I don't see as anything's missing 's far's I can see," added the landlady, glancing around.

Ruth Dunn was for the moment balanced between

anxiety to read her son's letter and curiosity to hear the landlady's news; but the former impulse won, and she read as follows (the letter being without date, as it was without signature, except in the initials):

"DEAREST MOTHER IN THE WORLD: The solemn interview is over, and my lord is pleased to be satisfied with my appearance, credentials and chirography, and has accepted me as his lordship's private and confidential secretary.

"My lord has highly important work, which he wishes to set me about immediately.

"I cannot, for the life of me, see the importance of the work, for—will you believe it?—it is only to take down from my lord's lips his lordship's dream of the preceding night, before my lord shall forget it. I fear my lord's brain is not of the vigorous texture it could boast in the ante-matrimonial and mortification days, when his lordship led the liberal party in the House of Commons.

"Am I writing unfilially? Well, my lord has put in no claim for filial honor. The name Dunn suggested no remembrance of Duane; nor did the family resemblance, with the Daw blaze in the forehead (as if we were a race of horses), bring suspicion to the mind, compunction to the heart, or tears to the eyes, of my lord—a fact that may be accounted for by another fact, that my lord is about half blind from, as I understand, a weakness in the optic nerve, which, indeed, renders the presence of an amanuensis and secretary a positive necessity to his lordship. The family resemblance of which you spoke, dear mother, is positively startling, as I had an opportunity of seeing as I passed through the library and came face to face with a full-length, life-sized portrait

of Mr. John Daw, my lord's eldest son, when I thought —I actually *did*—that I was meeting my own reflection in a full-length mirror! I had forgotten for a moment the difference in dress.

"Whether my lord will ever notice this resemblance on closer inspection, or ask me any questions, or whether I shall be moved to make myself known to his lordship, must depend much upon circumstances.

"I write now only to tell you that I shall not be home to-night, nor, in fact, until my lord pleases to let me off. When I do see you I will give you all the particulars of my interview with his lordship; and in the meantime rest assured that I am your very loving son,

"R. D."

Ruth Dunn read over this letter with mixed feelings of pleasure and annoyance. She was pleased that her son had received the situation and the good opinion of his patron; but she was annoyed by the slightly sarcastic tone of the writer, and his frequent ironical use of the terms "my lord" and "his lordship." She sighed as she folded the paper.

"I hope you haven't got no bad news," said Mrs. Brown, who always emphasized with double negatives.

"Oh, no; this is a note from my son, saying that he will not be able to come home to-night. He has just secured a good situation," Ruth explained.

"Ay, ay, that is a great thing for him, and you, too! And wot a steddy young man Mr. Roderick is—and *that* gifted and highly eddicated! You should take downright solid comfort in Mr. Roderick."

"I do," said the mother; "but didn't you say that you had something to tell me? that some one had called to see me, or something of the kind?"

"Oh, to be sure! though I don't know as to the calling to *see* you. I was afraid as it was a sneak thief! But you hain't missed nothing, have you?" said the landlady, looking around.

"No," replied Ruth, hastily rising and running to examine her bureau drawers, which she found locked as she had left them, with the keys in her pocket.

"Nor in Mr. Roderick's room nuther?" inquired the landlady.

"No," exclaimed Ruth, hastily looking into the little den, "why do you ask? No one could have got into these rooms. The door was locked and the key hidden where I found it when I came back. What do you mean?"

"Well, I hope the house ain't haunted, that's all! but not an hour ago Nancy Warthen stepped in here on her way home. She had been down to Bridge street to buy a 'levenpenny bit calico dress, and she dropped in to show it to me, and she asked me plump out who that dark-complected, hunch-backed man was upstairs in your rooms, and I told her there was no such man there; for that you had gone out and the place was locked up, but she swore that she did see a most dark-complected hunch-backed man a standing at your window as she came along walking under the college wall on the opper-site side of the way."

"Of course the woman was mistaken," said Ruth.

"So I told her; but she'd a swore a hole through an iron pot that she did see the man there, and she said nobody needn't try to argy her out of the evidence of her own two looking eyes."

"It is not worth talking about," said Ruth, "though, of course, we know that she *was* mistaken."

"Of course," admitted the landlady. "Though I felt

right down oneasy until you come and unlocked the rooms to see if all was safe—though how any one should have got into your rooms without they had walked up the front of the house like a fly and gone into the front windows, I don't know."

"Nor I, either."

"Sartainly: and now, as I'm satisfied, I will bid ye good-night," said the landlady, rising to go.

"Good-night, and thank you for your kindness, Mrs. Brown," said Ruth.

And when she was left alone she removed the fire-board from the fireplace, took a bundle of kindling wood from the closed bottom of her corner cupboard, lighted a little blaze, hung over it her tiny kettle of water, and made herself a cup of tea, which, with a "Medford" cracker, made her simple supper.

After clearing away her small table and replacing her fire-screen, she trimmed her lamp and sat down to sew until long after midnight, to make up for the time she had spent by the bedside of her sick neighbor.

When, about three o'clock, the overworked woman retired to bed, she fell into a deep sleep of fatigue that lasted unbroken until she was aroused by the loud ringing of the college bells—which were the "getting up bells," not only for the students of that great institution of learning, but also for all the laborers and housewives of the neighborhood.

She arose and hurried through her simple toilet and meagre breakfast, and sat down to her work, hoping that the day would bring a visit from her son. She worked steadily, for this was Friday, and her work was to be returned as usual on Saturday afternoon.

But the forenoon was not yet half over when her land-

lady toiled up the stairs once more, and sitting down breathless, exclaimed, panting:

"Oh, my dear critter, have you hearn what happened at the Wolf's Head o' Tuesday night, or, raythor, to speak correct, o' Wednesday morning, for it were after midnight?"

"No," replied Ruth, remembering vaguely that this was the time when her son Roderick accidentally encountered the wedding party and recognized his beautiful inamorata among the bridal party.

"Well, of all things! And we to hear nothing about it until to-day! But then we do live so far out'n the world and never take no newspapers."

"But what happened?" inquired Ruth.

"My dear woman, such a thing as never was hearn of in all the world before!" said the landlady. "Old Farmer Neverswood, what lives on the opposite way of the tavern, a little farther down the road, he was at market with a cow and calf to sell this morning, and I met him there when I went to buy meat for dinner, and he up and told me all about it. He's a old friend o' ours, you know."

"Yes," assented Ruth, though she did not know.

And then the landlady, in a hurried and excited manner, told the story of the strange adventure of the bridal party at the Wolf's Head.

Ruth Dunn listened with curiosity and interest, thinking secretly that this must have happened after her son had left the inn for his early journey into Washington. But she was filled with dismay at the result.

"What?" she exclaimed. "Did the bridegroom really *desert* the bride?"

"He really did! He ordered his horses and went then *and* there!"

"But—I do not yet understand—*why* did the bridegroom abandon the bride? *What* happened?" inquired Ruth.

"Ah, that's what nobody don't know. He was mumchance on the subjick. So was she. Neither of 'em never give no explanation; neither him nor her never opened their mouths to tell what was the bustle. He went right off in a huff and her into highstrikes."

"But—was there no suspicion of a quarrel, jealousy, or some misunderstanding? Did none of the servants about the place see or hear anything—as servants are nearly sure to do?"

"Not a thing, except the rumpus. Everybody heard that."

"And no chance word dropped as to the cause?"

"Hi, my dear creetur, what did I tell you? Not one precious word."

"And no reports, Mrs. Brown? That is almost impossible, under the curcumstances."

"Well, yes, there is reports, in course, but it all depends on Boots' word. *He* says, as when he went upstairs to gather the boots and shoes from outside the gentlemen's rooms, he saw the bride a-walking up and down the upper passage a-looking about the floor, and she axed him if he had seen a han'kercher laying round anywhere. And he said 'No.' And she said: 'Well, never mind, it would be found in the morning,' and then she opened a door and went into a room, and Boots he carried his load downstairs and out to the stable loft, where he slept, to clean them; and so *he* heard nothing of the rumpus till next morning, when he brought the boots and shoes back again. But, Lors, it may be only Boots' yarn."

"And seems to be of not the slightest importance, even

if it be true," said Ruth; but, at the same time, she remembered that her son had mentioned a handkerchief he had picked up on the stairs, and which he supposed to have been dropped by one of the bridesmaids—the beauty with whom he was insanely in love.

"Do you know the names of the parties in this strange adventure?" inquired Ruth.

"Well, the groom, he was a Mr. Dawes, I believe, but I don't know who the bride was, and no more do Farmer Neverswood."

"It seems to have been a mad escapade of anger or jealousy. I am sorry for the poor, forsaken bride," said Ruth.

"So be I—uncommon sorry, though I didn't know her. Farmer says she was took home to her friends by daylight next morning, in an almost dying condition, poor lamb!"

"Who are her friends?"

"Lor, I dunno; no more do he. Well, I can't set here talkin' all day long, with my dinner to get, so I'll bid ye good-mornin', honey," said the landlady, rising, with a sigh of weariness, to return to her never-ending work.

Ruth did not leave her sewing to get her own dinner. She darned on till she felt faint from hunger, and then she went downstairs, and bought a half a pint of milk for two cents, off which, with a slice of bread, she dined well.

Then she recommenced her work and mended the college boys' socks until sunset, when the door suddenly opened and her son stood before her.

CHAPTER XI

RUTH'S RESOLVE

"Why, Roderick!" she gladly exclaimed.

"Yes, mother, here I am!" said the young man, flinging himself heavily into a chair.

"I have been looking for you all day, dear."

"Yes, mother, but I could not get off from—*my lord.* I am regularly engaged now."

"Thank Heaven! Tell me all about it, Roderick! How did you like him?"

"I cannot tell yet, mother. I think I shall be able to tolerate him, but his eccentricity borders on insanity, I think."

"He has had much trouble," sighed Ruth.

"And he is so very much older than I expected to find him. Why, his hair is as white as snow, and cut so close that his round head looks like a silver ball. He seems to be at least thirty years older than you, my beautiful mother!"

"He is about twenty years my senior; but he did not look so when we first met; gentlemen of the upper classes do not age so fast, I think, as their less fortunate fellow-creatures."

"Well! he looks seventy years old now."

"He is not sixty; but the trouble of his later life must have told heavily upon him. Tell me of the interview."

"Well, I walked from here down to the city, and reached 'The Hill,' as his house is called, about eleven o'clock. Did you ever see his place, mother?"

"Never."

"Well, it is a very fine place; the house is quite a vast

edifice, built of red brick, on an eminence northeast of the Capitol grounds, and in the midst of large trees, which seem to have been a part of the primeval forest. As soon as I presented my card to the porter, he called a footman, and said:

"'Show this gentleman up to the library. My lord is expecting him.'

"I followed the footman up the handsomest flight of stairs I ever had the honor of ascending and through several sumptuous halls and corridors, that suggested rather a royal palace than a private dwelling, until at length we reached a pair of rosewood doors, which being opened, revealed a pair of crimson cloth doors, which being opened in their turn, admitted us into a fine library.

"The footman announced, simply:

"'Mr. Roderick Dunn, to wait upon my lord,' and closed the door behind me.

"It was then, mother, that I thought as I walked up toward the end of the room, where, between two crimson velvet draped windows, hung a full length portrait of Mr. John Daw, that I was meeting a reflection of my own form in a mirror.

"My lord sat at a table, covered with books, papers and writing materials, but he was neither writing nor reading. Wrapped in a black silk dressing-gown, he reclined in an easy-chair, idly and wearily. I approached, bowed and stood before him.

"'Oh! you are—Mr.—Mr.——' he began, and paused.

"'Dunn,' I added.

"'Ay, to be sure! Dunn! The man who has come about the secretary's situation.'

"'Yes, my lord.'

"'Hem! I liked your letter of application and your references. And I like your appearance. It will require time to show whether I shall like *you* in toto.'

"I bowed.

"'Have you a family to support?'

"'I have none, my lord.'

"'No family, no wife, no children?'

"'I have never been married, my lord,' I said.

"'So much the better! So much the better! Marriage is a great mistake, under all circumstances! A fatal mistake often, under many! And young Americans, I notice, marry when they are mere children. Bad! bad! bad!'

"I bowed, not knowing what else to do.

"Then my lord took up the business of the hour.

"'My sight is failing,' he said, 'and glasses do me no sort of good. I must have a young man to read and write for me, to be eyes and hands for me, to be with me, or near me by day and night—to be my shadow, in fact, and as I realize that this is exacting much, I am willing to pay most liberally for the sacrifice.'

"Again I bowed respectfully, for the want of a more definite answer.

"'Do you think you will be able to meet my requirements?' he demanded.

"'I will endeavor to do so, my lord; and as your lordship was pleased to say, it would require time to show whether you would like me——'

"'Yes, yes, yes; exactly, precisely, we will make the experiment! I should like you to begin at once.'

"'*Now,* my lord?' I asked, in some surprise.

"'Yes, *now,*' he answered irritably. 'I said *at once,* did I not? Then draw up your chair, I have a piece of work that must be done immediately. Something

that you must take down from my own lips before I forget it, and I have forgotten a good part of it already.'

"Then my lord pushed back his own chair, gave me a place at the table and pointed out the pen, ink and paper.

"I prepared for my work, and my lord opened his lips! To what purpose, do you think?" laughed Roderick Dunn.

"To relate his dreams. You told me so in your letter," replied Ruth.

"So I did! Yes, my first work was to put on record my lord's dream!"

"Was it so remarkable a dream?" inquired Ruth.

"Not at all—it was a rigmarole about meeting a friend of his earlier manhood, 'say a beloved sister,' he explained to me. He thinks he meets her every night in a dream, and they wander about through Gardens of Eden and talk of the past, and it is this that he wants recorded."

"I fear his mind is giving way."

"I know it is."

"Did you happen to see Mr. John Daw?" inquired Ruth.

"Why, no! of course not! He has gone North on a tour, you know," exclaimed the young man, in surprise at the question.

"Oh, there has been a reconciliation, then! Well, I thought there would be, of course, but not so immediately after such a public scandal! However, I am very glad that they have come together again, very! though it is a very great pity they should have had such a terrible fracas! At a public tavern, too, on the evening of their wedding-day! Who mediated between the

two and brought them together? Tell me all about it, dear!"

"I—— What in the world are you talking about, mother? What fracas? What candal?" inquired the young man, who, during his mother's speech, had been gazing at her in surprise and perplexity.

"Why, Roderick, my dear, is it possible that you do not know what happened at the Wolf's Head Tavern on the night you met the wedding party there?"

"'Wolf's Head Tavern!'" repeated the young man, changing color.

"Well, it must have happened after you had left, as you never said a word to me about it: but I thought you must have heard something of such a very terrible event, especially as you were in the very midst of the people most concerned, being at the house of the bridegroom's father."

"Mother! I am utterly incapable of understanding your meaning as yet. Something terrible happened at the Wolf's Head! What was it? No evil, I hope and trust, has come to the lovely little bridesmaid, Eldiva?" inquired the young man, in a strangely agitated voice.

"To Eldiva, the bridesmaid? Oh, no! It was to the bridal pair the calamity came, whatever it was. I certainly thought you must have heard all about it, down there in Washington, though *I* never heard anything of it until to-day, from my landlady, who heard it this morning at market from Farmer Neverswood, who lives near the Wolf's Head Tavern, and knew all the particulars that are known. The catastrophe must have occurred immediately after you left the house, Roderick."

"Yes. Will you tell me what it was, mother?" said the young man, with a strangely troubled look.

"I will tell you all that is known to anybody except

the bride and groom; but I assure you that there is a deep mystery behind it, all that must, it seems, remain unexplained, for neither bride nor groom will speak," said Ruth Dunn.

And she began and related to her son the strange story of the abandoned bride as she had heard it from Mrs. Brown—leaving, as she said, an unsolved mystery at its conclusion.

Roderick Dunn had grown very pale during the recital of the story, and at its end he arose and walked uneasily up and down the floor; and then, still walking, he said:

"About that lace handkerchief the bootblack saw the bride out in search of! You know it could not have been this one that I picked up, for I saw this flutter down from the hand of the beautiful bridesmaid, Eldiva, when she was at the head of the stairs and I at the foot, and before I could overtake and restore it to her she had followed the other two young ladies into the bridal chamber and shut the door, at which, indeed, I had not the courage to knock, even for the purpose of restoring a valuable pocket-handkerchief."

"I fancy you were glad of a good excuse to keep the memento for a little while, Roderick," smiled the lady.

"Yes," said the young man, drawing the elegant little fabric of lace and linen cambric from his bosom and contemplating it affectionately, "but what I wished to say was, that this handkerchief was dropped by the bridesmaid, beautiful Eldiva, and not by the bride: here is her pretty name embroidered in some one's hair on the corner—*Eldiva*. But I must return it as soon as I can find out where to send it."

"I shall have to get it up first," smiled Ruth Dunn.

"That is a terrible mortification to—every one concerned, I should think," said the young man.

"You mean the violent and unexplained separation of the bridal pair."

"Yes, of course; though I cannot see that it affects my lord in any way. He never alluded to his son or his son's marriage; though, to be sure, I was only his lordship's secretary, newly engaged, to whom he would not be likely to speak, even of so recent and striking an event. Still my impression now is that my lord was either glad of the separation or at least indifferent to it. He was not sorry or annoyed at anything of late date that I know."

"Perhaps he was opposed to the match," suggested the lady.

"Don't know, I'm sure. And now, mother dear, if you will have tea early so that I can take it with you, it would give me pleasure. I have to return to The Hill," said Roderick.

"Why, you are not going back to-night! I thought you were going to stay till to-morrow morning," said his mother, in a tone of disappointment.

"I am not my own man now, I told you that my lord acknowledged himself to be exacting, and so he is. I am obliged to make out a list of books to-night that my lord wishes me to consult and make extracts from early in the morning, and I shall have to be at the Capitol Library as soon as the doors are open to-morrow."

"What are these books?" inquired his mother.

"Oh, a lot of rubbish, *I* call them. Cornelius Agrippa, Theophrastus, Paracelsus, and scores of others on the occult sciences, whose names my lord has at his tongue's end and whose volumes he wishes me to consult

on the subject of dreams. I tell you my lord is cracked!"

Ruth sighed. She had risen, laid aside her work and commenced her simple preparations for tea.

The market garden and little dairy were very great conveniences to the poor lady, for from it at this season she could always get fresh vegetables and fruit, milk and butter at a low price to eke out her slender meals.

Now her table was spread with good bread and butter, cold ham, radishes, strawberries, and a pitcher of milk, besides the pot of fragrant young hyson tea.

As soon as the repast was over, Roderick got up to go.

"Good-by, mother dear! I expect to spend the whole day in the Congressional Library. Fortunately, it is only about ten minutes' walk from The Hill; but if I can get off in the evening I will come up to see you again. If I do not, why, do not expect me or be anxious about me."

And with this caution the young man embraced his mother and hurried from the house.

Ruth, being alone, ruminated on all she had heard. Was the lover, the husband of her youth so changed? Had the twenty years which had only matured her, so heavily aged him?

She had said only two days ago that she never wished to see him again. But now an irrepressible, great longing came over her to look on his face once more, if she could do so without making herself known to him or being recognized by him.

She began to consider whether this might be possible. It had been twice ten years since they had met, and these years had changed her much, though not for the worst, as they had changed him.

From a slender, graceful girl of seventeen, with a thin oval face, and a clear, blooming complexion, she had developed into a tall, full-formed, majestic woman of thirty-seven, with a rich, creamy complexion, but no bloom, except in the rich carnation of her lips. Her very voice, which had then been clear and silvery, was now deep and melodious.

No, he would never recognize the bud in the full-blown rose; for even if a trace of resemblance to the girl remained in the woman, my lord's sight was failing and he would fail to detect it.

She ended by concluding that it would be quite possible for her to stand face to face with Lord John Daw without being recognized by him.

She thought that the next day, when Roderick would be absent in the Congressional Library, would give her the chance of seeing his lordship alone.

She reflected what excuse she would make for calling on him. Suddenly she remembered the Strawberry Festival that was soon to come off at Christ's Church, for the benefit of the Sunday-school, and that she herself had been intrusted with a number of tickets to sell, and she resolved to present herself to Lord John Daw as one of the agents for the sale of the Festival tickets. If he had not changed even more in *heart* than in mind and body, he would receive the visitor who should come on behalf of the Sunday-school, for he had always loved children and advocated their religious instruction.

Ruth made up her mind to try her experiment the very next morning, and then she sat down and worked hard at her darning to gain time for her venture.

Again it was three o'clock in the morning before she retired to bed, when she immediately fell asleep and slept profoundly for two hours, when she was aroused,

as usual, by the ringing of the getting-up bell from the college over the way.

She arose quickly, hurried through her toilet and her breakfast, and sat down to work "like a Turk" until it should be time to go to "The Hill."

At ten o'clock she arose, put on her black bonnet, thick Chantilly lace veil, a relic of her better days, her black China crêpe shawl and well-mended black kid gloves, locked up her house, and started to walk down to the hotel on Bridge street, from which the stage left every half hour for the Capitol Hill and the Navy Yard.

The journey cost a quarter of a dollar in those days, but Ruth paid it cheerfully, for now that her son had a lucrative situation she was no longer afraid of their being devoured by "the wolf at the door."

There were nine passengers in the stage, all strangers to Ruth, but their conversation attracted and interested her, for it was all about the mysterious events at the Wolf's Head Tavern on the Tuesday night when the just wedded pair were so suddenly and violently estranged and separated.

"The groom was the son of the real estate millionaire —that English nobleman, Lord John Daw; but who was the bride? Can any one here tell?" inquired a short, thick-set, red-headed, and red-bearded man of his fellow-passengers.

"George! Don't you know? Why, she was Miss Eldiva Lisburne, daughter of that Colonel Lisburne who was killed in the battle of Bladensburg, and she was the niece of Mrs. Roslyn—the widow Roslyn who lives at Shadow Hall, that ghostly old house on Jersey Avenue, down by the river. There was a great wedding there on Tuesday, I hear," answered a pale young man with black hair and whiskers.

Ruth took in every word. If this was the truth that the man was telling, then her Roderick was mistaken, and the lost handkerchief that seemed to have borne so serious a part in the drama of the evening, and which bore in its corner the name of Eldiva, *had* been dropped by the bride, whose name *was* Eldiva, and not by the bridesmaid, as he had supposed.

And then a terrible thought occurred to her. Roderick might have been mistaken in another respect—he might have been mistaken in supposing the little dark-eyed beauty—whom he declared had dropped the handkerchief—to have been a bridesmaid, when she might have been the bride herself! If so, what a dreadful complication in Roderick's love dream!

Ruth Dunn was not one to suffer any suspense that she could end by a question. Turning to the ague-cheeked young man who had spoken last, she said:

"You know Miss Lisburne, then?"

"I knew her by sight, ma'am, but not to speak to," civilly replied the latter.

"Will you be kind enough to tell me, then, what sort of looking young person Miss Lisburne was? I have a reason for asking which is not mere idle curiosity," Ruth explained.

"Certainly, ma'am. What sort of looking young person was she? Well, she was considered very beautiful by some men, but not by me, for I admire fair-complexioned and finely-formed ladies, and this Eldiva was small and very dark—a miniature Venus, I have heard her called."

"I thank you. Small, and dark, and beautiful; that is what you said, I believe?" inquired Ruth, to make assurance doubly sure.

"Yes, ma'am, small, and dark, and very beautiful in some men's eyes."

"Again, I thank you. Will you be kind enough to give that young lady's address? I ought to give you some explanation of my questions, however. The fact is, I—*we* have in our possession a small piece of property that was supposed to have been dropped by a lady answering to Miss Lisburne's description, and bearing the name of *Eldiva* marked upon it: and I—*we* wish to return the article."

"Well, ma'am, she lives at Shadow Hall, down on Jersey Avenue, near the river; but I hear that she has gone from there now, and some kinsfolk of hers have taken her down into the country for a change; and she needed it, poor young lady, I guess. But, however, the madam is at the Hall still, and you might send the—the pocketbook, or whatever it is you found, to her."

"Thank you," said Ruth, for the third time, and without thinking it worth while to set the young man right in regard to the "pocketbook."

"That was a dreadful thing that happened at the Wolf's Head, ma'am, particularly for the young lady, to be cast off and abandoned on the very evening of her wedding-day," said the stranger, apparently desirous of keeping up the conversation.

"Yes, but I know nothing of the circumstances beyond the fact that there was a sudden separation," answered Ruth, who, having learned all her fellow-passengers could tell her in regard to the identity of the bride, now wished to drop the subject.

"Nor nobody else, I guess, except the two themselves," remarked the young man.

And then silence fell between them, and lasted until the stage reached Delaware Avenue, north of the Capi-

tol, where Ruth got out and inquired her way to The Hill, of the only person she saw—an old colored woman, in a sunbonnet, who was seated at a little table under the shade of a locust tree selling cakes and root beer.

The old aunty pointed up the avenue, and told the inquirer to take the turning to the left, "tow-*wards* the Bladensburg Road."

This avenue was but a broad, grass-grown road then, flanked on the north with a few old country houses with gardens and orchards around them, and an occasional modern building, such as the town house of old Lord Fairfax, which is still standing, though now occupied as a hotel: and on the south side by the Capitol grounds, which were then shaded by the gigantic forest trees that had been left standing when the park was first laid out.

Ruth hurried along the shaded avenue, noting the natural hedges formed by the luxuriant growth of the eglantine, wild rose, blackberry, honeysuckle, maythorn and dogwood, all self-planted, and growing and entangling at their own sweet will, all along each side of the way. She took the indicated turning to the left, "tow-*wards* the Bladensburg Road," and soon saw the finest private dwelling in its grove of forest trees, on the top of the hill on her right.

She began to tremble as she approached the iron gates that finally admitted her into the heavily wooded grounds. She passed up a densely shaded walk to the front of the house, ascended the stone steps, and rapped timidly with the great brass knocker that adorned the strong mahogany double doors.

A gray-haired porter threw them open.

"Is Lord John Daw in?" timidly inquired Ruth.

"I'll see, mum," answered the old porter, beckoning a young footman, who approached and stood at attention.

"What name shall I send up to my lord, mum?" inquired the porter.

"What name? I—it—it is of no consequence. Say that a lady has called to wait on my lord in behalf of the Protestant Episcopal Sunday-school," replied Ruth, in a hesitating and confused manner, for her agitation was increasing every moment.

"Thomas, go up and see if my lord is at home, and say that 'a lady has come to wait on his lordship in behalf of the Protestant 'Piscopal Sunday-school,' " said the disgusted porter, daring to mimic the agitated visitor.

The more civil young footman touched his forehead to the lady, and went upstairs to take her message.

Ruth sank down on the nearest chair, for she was trembling so violently that she could scarcely stand.

The immediate prospect of meeting this man, who had been the lover of her youth, and whom she had innocently believed to be the husband of her life, was so overwhelming to her that she almost wished, now, to be reprieved from the trial, wished that word might be brought back to her that Lord John Daw was *not* at home.

But the footman soon returned, saying, respectfully: "My lord will see you, ma'am. Please walk up."

CHAPTER XII

THAT VOICE

Supreme was the effort of self-command with which Ruth Dunn composed herself, and arose to follow the footman to the inevitable meeting she had so rashly invoked.

He conducted her up that noble oak staircase, enriched with fine statuary on every landing, and on through a lofty upper hall, where walls of crimson hangings were adorned with costly oil paintings—artistic and faithful copies of the old masters—all of which had so excited the admiration of her rustic son, Roderick; and so on to the library on the right.

The footman opened the rosewood, and the crimson cloth doors, and announced:

"The lady from the Sunday-school, my lord," and retired.

Ruth advanced slowly and timidly up the long room, from some obscure corner of which an old gentleman, with a rotund form, wrapped in a black silk dressing-gown, a round, silver-gray head, and a fresh, clean-shaven face, arose and came forward to meet her; for Lord John, with all his eccentricity and irritability, was courteous to women, except when they crossed his hobbies.

"How do you do, ma'am? Take this easy-chair by the window; it is cool here;—and tell me what I can have the pleasure of doing for your Sunday-school," he said, with a slight wave of his delicate hand toward a luxurious seat at the lofty window, between his writing-desk and the full-length likeness of his son.

"I thank you, my lord," said Ruth, trembling excessively, as she seated herself and drew the chair around so that her back was to the lighted window and her face in the deep shadow.

"I have always been interested in Sunday-schools, ma'am, and shall be glad to do what I can," said the old gentleman, perceiving that his visitor seemed embarrassed and inclined to hesitate.

"I have heard so, my lord, and have, therefore, ven-

tured to call upon you," said Ruth, in a low voice, at the sound of which the old gentleman turned his head to listen, with a look of slight surprise and pleasure, for though Ruth spoke so low, her tones were full, rich and sweet, a luxury of sound to a musical ear.

Ruth drew from her black velvet reticule a packet of tickets, while the old lord took from his drawer a check-book.

"If you will kindly buy a few of these tickets to distribute among your friends' children," said Ruth, laying the packet before him.

Again the old lord paused in the act of opening his checkbook to listen to the melody of the voice that fascinated him.

Was it only the melody, or was it some old, familiar, half-forgotten cadence so

"The electric chord with which we are darkly bound?"

He did not know, perhaps, and he spoke:

"I am not a charitable man, Mrs.—Mrs.——"

He paused, but she did not help him to her name. She only bowed and he resumed:

"I am not a charitable man, and do not wish to be called or considered so—especially in regard to grown-up people; but children are innocent little sinners, and I will do what I can to keep them from becoming guilty ones."

While he spoke he was signing a check, and Ruth noticed, with a pang of pity, how low he bent and how closely he peered at his work, and how crooked the letters were when he handed her the paper.

"I thank you, my lord—I thank you very much," she said, on receiving it; then glancing at the check and

seeing it was for fifty dollars, she flushed slightly and handed it back, saying: 'Excuse me, my lord, but I have no more than five dollars' worth of tickets with me."

Once more the old gentleman leaned, with a strange interest, to drink in the melody of that voice before he answered.

"I know! I know! Keep the tickets, my dear lady, or distribute them among poor children who are unable to buy, and keep the check. It is but a trifle toward your library, or whatever it is you are getting for the Sunday-school."

"You are very, very good, my lord, and this, indeed, will be a great help. I thank you very much," said Ruth, rising to go.

"A trifle—nothing. I should really like to have you stay longer—and—talk to me—about—the Sunday-schools. I am expecting my secretary here on very important business. We are to go over, together, the works of the great Van Helmont, which he is to fetch me from the Congressional Library. I *wish* you would remain until he comes," urged the old gentleman, with much more than usual hospitality.

"Oh, pray excuse me, my lord, I—should be honored—and pleased to stay longer: but—I am indeed very much pressed with work to-day, and must bid your lordship good-day, with many thanks," said Ruth, as she bowed and turned away.

The old gentleman arose and walked down the room by her side until they reached the inner crimson doors.

As he opened them for her, he said:

"When and where is that Sunday-school festival to be held? I think I shall attend it. I *like* Sunday-school festivals. You will be there on duty, of course?"

"If nothing should prevent me, my lord."

"Then I will certainly go. For I want to hear you talk—about the cause. Where, and—what day, did you say the festival was to be held?"

"Here is a ticket, my lord, which will give you all necessary information. Good-morning, and many thanks," said Ruth, as she handed the passport, bowed, and went out.

"*Who is she?*" ruminated the old man, as he went slowly back to his seat—"*Who is she?* and why does her voice affect me so? Ah, if I could only have *her* for my amanuensis and secretary! If I could only listen to *her* voice every day of my life, what a comfort it would be to me. But that would never do—never do! No, no, it is not to be thought of! The world would have its false and ill-natured comments to make! Yet, how strange and restorative that woman's presence is to me! What can be the reason? I see! Oh, I see! She is the incarnation of that vague woman of my dream! Heigh-ho!"

He stood leaning on his desk for a while, and then, instead of sitting, he walked slowly up and down the long room.

"Heigh-ho!" he sighed. "I am very lonely in my old age—very lonely—especially now that John has taken himself off to Canada to escape the eyes and tongues of his friends and acquaintances, and to forget his disreputable marriage. But he will never forget it until it is dissolved by law. And it must be dissolved! John will be the heir of his uncle's dukedom, and he must marry again to keep up the family title."

So, branching off to other subjects, the old lord finally sank into his elbow-chair to await the arrival of his secretary.

In the meantime Ruth Dunn, drawing her veil closely over her face, descended the long staircase, which was then shrouded in semi-darkness, not only from the dim obscurity of the stained glass windows, but from the pressure against them of the heavily foliaged old forest trees around the outside of the house.

Ruth kept her hand on the heavy balustrades as she descended.

When about half-way down she heard some one toiling up the stairs.

She feared it might be her son, Roderick, the secretary, whom my lord was momentarily expecting.

She pressed herself closely against the balustrades, and drew her veil farther over her face to keep it out of sight of the new-comer.

In another moment he reached her, stared at her for an instant, and passed on upstairs.

"Thank Heaven it is not Roderick!" she said, as in her turn she stared after the man, a humpbacked cripple, who wore his black hair and beard long, like a German artist, and who limped as he walked.

Ruth was moved by a woman's curiosity to ask the hall footman at the bottom of the stairs:

"Who is that"—she hesitated whether to say man or gentleman, and finally she said—"person who has just gone upstairs?"

"My lord's secretary, ma'am," replied the servant.

"Oh, no, I do not mean his lordship's secretary. I did not see *him*. I mean a dark man with black hair and beard and a humpback, who limps as he walks," Ruth explained.

"That's him, ma'am! That's my lord's new secretary," replied the footman.

"Has my lord got two secretaries, then?" inquired Mrs. Dunn.

"Bless you, no, mum! He never had any until yesterday his lordship engaged this gentleman."

"I think you are mistaken," said the mystified lady. "I happen to know Lord John Daw's secretary, and he is a totally different looking man from this person."

"Don't like to contradict a lady, mum, but this dark-complected, humpbacked party is my lord's new secretary as he engaged no longer ago than yesterday."

"Then what is this man's name?"

"Let me see—what *is* it again?—Hunt! Yes, that is it. Hunt, ma'am—Professor Hunt!"

"If you are right, I have been greatly mistaken," said Ruth; and then, at length, feeling that it was scarcely proper conduct for her to stand there questioning and cross-questioning the servant of Lord John Daw, she passed on her way to the front doors.

The footman darted before her, opened them, and Ruth Dunn left the house.

She went down the heavily-shaded walk and passed the great iron gates; but she did not go toward the stage-stand.

She wanted to reach some secluded spot where she could relieve her overburdened heart with a good cry.

She crossed over to the Capitol grounds, entered by the north gate, and sought the shelter of a dark grove at the northeast corner.

Here she dropped down into the tall, deep grass and gave herself up to a paroxysm of tears and sobs.

She had seen him again—the lover of her youth. She had seen him again after twenty years, and oh, how changed, how old, gray, worn, and infirm he looked!

She felt that she loved him still, and pitied him with a tenderness that nearly broke her heart.

Had she been too proud, hard, and cruel in banishing him so utterly out of her life that he was left to a dreary solitude, an empty desert, in which both mind and body had weakened and aged? Might she not have allowed a sisterly and brotherly friendship and association to have been continued between them? Might she not, at least, have permitted a correspondence by letter? Would not either plan have been better than this utter, deadly estrangement?

She put these questions to herself now that it was too late to answer them.

And what must be her future relations to this prematurely aged and broken man?

Her interview with him had been full of unspoken pathos. His dim eyes had not seen her features clearly, his dull ears had to bend to catch her words. His weakened senses had not recognized her yet—"the pity of it!"—his *soul* had divined her, his soul called for her!

What could she do for him? If it could only be right, she would go and keep house for him, nurse him, take care of him, and make him as happy as she could, just as if she were his daughter, and she would ask no remembrance of the past, and no recognition in the present. If this could only be right!

In the meantime, one course was clearly right—that her son Roderick should do all that lay in *his* way to render happy this dreary old man.

Her fit of weeping had relieved her, and she arose to walk toward the corner of the avenue, where she was to wait for the stage.

As she drew near the north gate she saw the yellow

coach coming up the hill from the West, and she hurried to be in time to meet it.

A few minutes more and she was seated alone, the only passenger in the vehicle, being swiftly drawn toward Georgetown.

Two subjects, besides the recent meeting with Lord John Daw, occupied her thoughts.

One was the identity of Lord John Daw's new secretary. Was the dark, hunchbacked man in green spectacles that secretary, as the footman, who ought to know, declared him to be? And if so, where was her son Roderick, and what was his office about the house? And if there were two secretaries, why had he not told her? It was all a mystery!

The other was the identity of young John Daw's forsaken bride. Was *she* the "Eldiva" with whom Roderick had ignorantly fallen in love, whom he had mistaken for one of the bridesmaids, and whose handkerchief he had found and kept for a memorial? If so, the young man's dream was sinful and his case was hopeless.

Ah! upon the whole, Ruth Dunn's morning's adventure had not contributed to her peace of mind.

There was indeed but one pleasant item in the day's doings, and that was the check for fifty dollars, which she should have the pleasure of presenting to the treasurer of the church for the benefit of the Sunday-school library.

It was late in the afternoon when Ruth Dunn reached home. She hastily laid off her bonnet and shawl and made a cup of tea, which she took with a slice of bread, to keep body and soul together, until she could finish her week's task.

Then she sat down and worked diligently until sunset, when she set the last stitch, hurriedly made up the par-

cel, threw on her bonnet, and took it over to the old porter at the college gate.

When she had received her pay, she went down to the market to buy a Sunday's dinner, for she knew her son would be off duty on the Sabbath and would spend the day with her.

She scarcely expected him home that night, yet she sat up late, waiting lest he should come.

At length, feeling sure that she should see him in the morning, she went to bed and slept off the fatigue of the last two days and nights.

The next morning, just as she had finished dressing, Roderick entered the room, saying quietly:

"My lord kept me at Van Helmont and his mysticism until twelve o'clock last night; he would have kept me longer had it been any other night than Saturday; being a strict churchman, he would not let me break the Sabbath day by working after twelve o'clock; but, at all events, he kept me too long to make it possible for me to return to you. How are you, mother dear? You look pale and tired this morning."

"I am well; a little tired, but the Sabbath rest will restore me, Roderick. I am glad you came so early as to take breakfast with me."

"I was resolved to do it, mother dear. I was up at sunrise this morning, and walked all the way from the Capitol Hill here; and the tramp through the morning air has given me a sharp appetite."

"Come to breakfast, then. Here is some fine coffee and fresh cream from Mrs. Brown, and some nice rolls and butter, and a chicken cooked yesterday."

They sat down to the table, and as Ruth handed her son his cup of coffee she inquired:

"Is there another secretary or amanuensis in the employment of Lord John Daw?"

"Why, no, mother; of course not. I am the only one. Why should you suppose there was another?" inquired the young man, in some surprise.

"I—should think if my lord's literary work is so heavy as to keep one amanuensis up until twelve o'clock every night, that his lordship ought to have two—that is all," said Ruth, with a twinge of conscience at the prevarication.

Roderick laughed and replied:

"But he could not dictate to two at the same time, dear mother."

"No, of course not," murmured Ruth.

Then she thought of the other puzzle, and said:

"By the way, my dear Roderick, you should really see about returning that handkerchief which is in your possession."

"Oh, I am going to return it," replied the young man, drawing the bit of cambric and lace from his breast pocket and throwing it carelessly upon the bureau. "It is not my dark-eyed angel's handkerchief, after all. Nor is her name Eldiva. Here have I been cherishing and kissing a bauble that belongs not to her, but to that blue-eyed Juno of a bride."

"But how do you know this, Roderick?" inquired Ruth, who was perplexed by his half knowledge with its consequent mistake.

"By the simplest means. I took up the *Intelligencer* and read the marriage notice—where the name of the bride was set down as Eldiva, only daughter of the late Colonel Lisburne."

"But how do you know that Eldiva, the bride, was *not*

the little dark-eyed beauty who dropped the handkerchief that bears her name?"

"Oh, mother, because the bride was pointed out to me by one of the waiters. The bride was a tall queenly blonde."

"Roderick, my dear, that waiter was mistaken. The bride, Eldiva, *was* that little, dark-eyed beauty who dropped the handkerchief you picked up," said Ruth; and then she was frightened by the effect of her words upon the young man.

He stared at her in horror a moment, and then exclaimed:

"Mother! Mother! Oh, for Heaven's sake, don't say so! Don't! It cannot be true!"

"My dear Roderick, it is true. I know it for a positive fact, which it is my duty to impress on you, and I trust, my son, that you have honor and firmness enough to conquer a passion which you know would be sinful to cherish," gravely replied the lady.

"Oh, mother, it is not that. It is not that! It is not my disappointment! But, oh, it is too horrible, too horrible! That *she* should be the abandoned bride of John Daw! Mother, *how* do you know this?" he demanded.

"My dear, I had occasion to go down in the stage to the city yesterday and met a neighbor who knew Eldiva Lisburne by sight, and described her as small, dark, and beautiful; and further stated that when she met with the misadventure that caused her sudden separation from her husband, she was in search of that handkerchief she had dropped."

"Great Heaven! I see it all now! And I wish, oh! I wish that I had dropped dead at the door before I ever entered the Wolf's Head?"

"Roderick! Roderick; what *do* you mean?" exclaimed his mother, in alarm.

But the young man had risen and pushed back his chair, and now he said:

"Let me go away for a little while."

And he withdrew to his own den at the head of the stairs.

Ruth did not follow him. She was in great trouble, but she went mechanically about her household duties, cleared up the table and prepared herself for church.

By the time she was ready, Roderick re-entered the room, pale, but calm and firm.

She looked at him anxiously.

"Mother," he said, in reply to her mute questioning —"mother, never mention her name again. Let the subject drop forever."

"I will do so, Roderick," she answered.

And he took his hat and walked with her to church.

CHAPTER XIII

CHANGES AT SHADOW HALL

MEANWHILE the mystery of the broken marriage remained unsolved at Shadow Hall.

Old Mr. Jubal Wells was as silent as the sphinx and as obstinate as a mule before the persistent questionings of Zora Roslyn.

"'Be innocent of the knowledge, dearest chuck,'" he would quote in answer to the widow's importunities.

"'Where ignorance is bliss 'tis folly to be wise,'" or else:

"'It is best to let sleeping dogs lie.'"

"How intolerably provoking! Is this separation likely to be a lasting one?" said Zora.

"It is a final one, yes."

"Is there ground for divorce? Will Mr. John Daw seek the legal dissolution of his marriage?"

"I don't know how the courts of law might construe the event that caused the separation. But the question will never be raised. Mr. John Daw told me that though a deep disaster had obliged him to repudiate his bride, yet he loved her still, too dearly to hurt her in any manner; that therefore he should never draw public attention toward her by seeking for a divorce."

"WILL you tell me 'the cause, the cause, my soul?'" implored Zora Roslyn, with clasped hands.

"No, I will not, my dear. I cannot. I am under solemn promise to Mr. John Daw never to tell any one. He told me the facts under the seal of secrecy, and he *only* told me that he might render some satisfactory explanation to *me,* as the young lady's guardian, for his apparently causeless and cruel desertion of her," concluded old Jubal Wells, as he lighted his pipe and walked out into the garden.

Zora Roslyn went upstairs to that pleasant front chamber now occupied by Eldiva.

The forsaken bride was reclining in an armchair by one of the windows. She wore a white wrapper, and her long black hair was unbound and flowing over her shoulders. She was very pale and quiet, and her fingers were engaged in the lace-making that was then as popular as crochet is now.

Mrs. Roslyn drew a chair and seated herself beside Eldiva and said:

"Diva, dearest, I have come once more to *implore* you to tell me your secret—you know what I mean."

The girl laid down her lace frame on her lap and exclaimed:

"Aunt Zoe! if you have any mercy in your heart, any pity for my woe, never repeat that question! I *cannot* answer it."

"But if you do not tell me your secret, how can I ever learn how to comfort you, my dear?" tenderly inquired the lady.

"You cannot comfort me. No one could under the circumstances," replied the girl in a tone of quiet despair.

Mrs. Roslyn groaned.

"Uncle and Aunt Wells have invited me to go down and spend the summer with them at Bloomfield," said Eldiva.

"Yes, I know; they mentioned the matter to me. They want us all to go," replied Mrs. Roslyn.

"I think I shall do so. I wish to get away from this place and never to see or hear of it again," murmured Eldiva.

"Then I think we had better go for a little while. Afterward, perhaps, you may feel like returning with me. And you know, Diva, darling, 'while there is life there is hope.'"

"Not for me! Oh, not for me! My only hope is beyond this life!" sighed the girl.

"Do not speak so despondently, my poor dear! Oh, how I wish I knew what was the cause of all this!"

Mrs. Roslyn left the room to set about her preparations for going to Bloomfield.

In going down the front stairs she saw that the street door was open and that Lance sat out on the front porch

with Nea on his lap. His arm was around the child's waist, hers around his neck, and he held in his hand a Primary Geography, from which he was orally teaching her the first lesson—namely, that the earth was round and divided into land and water.

Mrs. Roslyn came out and spoke to the young midshipman.

"Lance, we are all going down to St. Mary's county to spend the summer with Uncle Jubal and Aunt Joyce. Would you like to go?"

"Why, of course I would! I haven't been down the country since—let me see! since I was eight years old! We'll have jolly times there, won't we, Nea? I'll show you where the mountain cherries grow!"

"Mamma!" said Nea, "Lance tells me that I certainly *do* see better than I did when he went away three years ago."

"Oh, Lance, my dear, do you really think so?" eagerly inquired the child's mother.

"I am quite sure of it, mamma. I remember well enough—oh! don't I?—just how little she could see when I went away!—only just the sunrise and the sunset, and only as a dim fire on the horizon."

"And now, Lance, how much better—can she see now? What can she see now?"

"Why, large, solid objects!"

"Heaven grant that this improvement may go on to perfect restoration of her sight," fervently prayed the mother.

"I think, from what Dr. Hamilton said from the beginning, that it will be so, if we take the best care of her health; and that in a year or so she may be as well as any one. What do you think of that, Nea?" inquired Lance, caressing the blind child.

"Oh! I shall love to see! I shall love to see! To see you, Lance!" she answered, putting up her hand and passing it fondly over his face.

"You must attend to getting your things together, Lance, and if you have anything to be washed, give them out at once."

"When do we leave?"

"On Tuesday morning, I think," said Mrs. Roslyn, as she went into the house.

The day was a busy one, for Zora Roslyn stirred up and drove every one with their preparations in a way that was wonderful with her indolent and easy-going nature.

Mr. Jubal Wells went to negotiate with Captain Miles Tawney, of the *Kitty,* and succeeded in effecting an arrangement by which the whole of the little cabin was engaged for a party of nine ladies and gentlemen, with their servants.

Shadow Hall was to be left in the possession of Old Uncle Biggs and Aunt Apple.

On Tuesday morning quite a gay procession set forth from the old hall for Coombes's Wharf, which was at the foot of the same avenue, and where the *Kitty* lay.

The voyagers were standing on deck, when the boy, Gad, from Shadow Hall, came running down to the wharf, gesticulating wildly, with a letter that he shook above his head.

Lance ran across the gang-plank to meet him.

"What is it, Gad?"

"A letter wot Marse Letter Carrier Schofiel' fotch to de house little w'ile ago."

Lance looked at the superscription of the letter, *"Mrs. John Daw,"* started, hurried on deck, and handed it to his cousin, saying:

"It is for you."

"Who is it from, Eldiva? Oh I see; it is a drop letter. Is it from Imperia North?" inquired Mrs. Roslyn, bending over the girl's shoulder to scrutinize the handwriting.

"No, it is from—my—from Mr. John Daw," breathed the forsaken bride, in an almost expiring voice.

"From him!" exclaimed Mrs. Roslyn. "Well!"

CHAPTER XIV

THE LETTER—THE SUMMONS

"YES, this letter—is from—Mr. John Daw," repeated the deserted bride, in a vacant, faltering, mechanical voice, as she gazed at the handwriting on the envelope.

"Let me take you down to the cabin, my love," whispered Mrs. Roslyn, fearing that her niece was about to faint under excess of emotion.

And she drew the arm of the girl within her own and led her off, crowding along between piles of bales, boxes and barrels, that still lumbered the little deck, and thence down the companion-way that led into the little, dark cabin, and placed her in one of the two armchairs.

Eldiva sank down in the chair to which her aunt had led her, and held her letter unopened in her lap.

"Why don't you read it?" inquired Mrs. Roslyn, who was consumed with curiosity.

"For now," she thought to herself, "I shall certainly find out why he ran away from her on the wedding night."

"Aunt Zora, would you kindly leave me here for a few moments? I must be alone when I open this letter," said Eldiva, in a deprecating tone.

"Well, of all requests in the world I think that is the strangest! Of course I will go, if you wish me to do so," replied the lady, with a look of pique, as she left the cabin.

Still, when left alone, poor Eldiva held the letter unopened for a while, as if she feared to read it. Then with a low-breathed:

"Heaven have pity on me!" she broke the seal, her fast flowing tears dimming her vision and blotting the paper as she tried to read the wild, illegible, incoherent outpouring of anguish that follows:

THE HILL, May 10, 18--.

MY BELOVED ELDIVA:—For—notwithstanding the thunderbolt of malignant fate that was hurled upon us on our wedding day, riving us asunder ever and ever —you are still my beloved Eldiva, yes, the best beloved of all the world to me!—how much beloved, the solitude to which I doom my whole future life, the extinction to which I doom the ancient, historic house and title of which I am the latest representative and heir—will prove.

For though we must never meet again, face to face, in this lower world, or at least not until one or the other of us shall come to his or her deathbed, yet I shall never seek a legal dissolution of our marriage, and therefore never give a successor either to my hand or heart.

"My life must linger on alone."

In our last brief, stormy interview, on that fatal night which reft us asunder, I was harsh, cruel and most

unjust to you—to you, poor heart, who were suffering agonies more acute, if possible, than those which rent my own soul. But, Eldiva, I was mad, frantic, infuriated by pain, rage and despair. The lion suddenly reft of his mate could be no less irresponsible for his raging fury than was I for my words and actions in that maddening hour! Yet now the remembrance of them raises pain to agony. I do not mean to excuse myself. I do not dare to ask your pardon. I only wish to retract every bitter word uttered in my frenzy and to declare that I hold you guiltless, blameless, in that calamity—that I believe, *know* you to be as innocent as a child, immaculate as an angel.

The cause of our separation has never passed my lips, except to your guardian, Mr. Jubal Wells, to whom the explanation was positively due and from whom it could not properly be withheld. But before imparting the secret to him, I bound him by oath never to reveal it.

He never will, I feel sure, nor will I ever do so while I live. The cause of our sudden separation is the affair of ourselves alone. The world has nothing whatever to do with it; or if it thinks it has, let it cast its reproach upon me alone, the son of "the mad lord," who has inherited some of his father's eccentricities, if not his insanity.

Reproach shall not touch you, my still dearest one. I have caused our marriage notice to be inserted in all the papers. The marriage settlement made upon you must now be doubled. You must continue to bear my name, and when, in due course of time, I shall come into the family honors, you must wear my title.

In the meanwhile, if during your mortal life I should be brought near death—an event most likely to happen

—I shall surely summon you, and I pray you then to come to me.

If, on the other hand, it be ordained that during my lifetime *you* should be brought face to face with the last great change—which may Heaven forbid—I pray you then to send for me, and I will surely go to you.

Though we can never meet in life, we must meet in death.

And now let me beg you to answer this letter. I implore you, Eldiva, to write to me. I long, I hunger to hear from you; for, though the fate which has severed us forbids that we should ever clasp hands again in this world yet I am, and must always continue, your devoted though most unhappy lover and husband,

JOHN DAW.

"Good, noble, generous heart!" sobbed the forsaken bride, as she finished this letter and pressed it to her lips.

She covered the paper with kisses, bedewed it with tears, and then put it in her bosom next to her heart. Then covering her face with her hands, she sank back in her chair to reflect.

In her deep pre-occupation she had not noticed that the schooner was in motion, for that motion was, as yet, smooth enough.

Her reflections were interrupted by the re-entrance of Mrs. Roslyn, whose mind was too much excited by curiosity to allow her to keep quiet for any length of time.

"Well, you have had ample opportunity to read your letter. Will you tell me now, as to one who is interested in your welfare, what effect that letter is likely to have on your future destiny? Does Mr. John Daw propose

a reconciliation or—a repudiation?" she inquired, as she seated herself in one of the rocking-chairs.

"You may read the letter for yourself, Aunt Zora," said the girl, taking it from her bosom and handing it to the lady.

"Oh, thank you, Eldiva. This is, at length, as it should be. You ought not to have any secrets from me, you know. There is no one in the world more solicitous for your good than I am," said Mrs. Roslyn, as she opened the letter and commenced to read, thinking to herself, "Now I shall certainly come to the bottom of the mystery."

Great was Mrs. Roslyn's disappointment. The letter revealed nothing of the "mystery," and all her efforts to extract information on the subject from Eldiva were futile.

The *Kitty* was going down the river with the tide, but there was a fresh head wind that grew stronger, so that the vessel had to tack from side to side, and the progress was so slow that it was near noon when she reached Alexandria's crowded little port.

As the *Kitty* was to remain here several hours to take on freight for Charlotte Hall, and the neighborhood of the wharf was intolerably hot and ill-flavored, our whole party left the vessel and went to the old Royal George Tavern, on King Street.

The voyagers dined at the Royal George, and after dinner all, with the exception of Eldiva, took a walk around the old town to call on various acquaintances.

Eldiva called for writing materials, and established herself at a table in the corner of the then unoccupied "ladies' parlor," and drew forth her lost bridegroom's letter for the purpose of reading it over once more, and then answering it in time for the evening's mail.

Her letter was unconventional in all respects, undignified, considering the circumstances, discreet to the last degree, as any of her friends would have said; yet it was the true, natural, impulsive outpouring of her heart.

ROYAL GEORGE INN, Alexandria, Va.,
May 15, 18—.

MY ADORED HUSBAND:—Since you will still let me call you so, your merciful letter was handed me after our departure thence, and it was brought to me by Gad, who ran all the way from the house to the wharf to give it to me before the schooner should sail. I wish that it had reached me an hour earlier that I might have answered it as quickly as I ought to have done, but I am very thankful that I did not altogether miss the joy of getting it.

Oh! you do not know the comfort this dear letter has brought me!—the only ray of comfort that has reached my soul since the awful night of our severance.

To know that you do not blame me—to feel that you still love me, is the sweetest consolation I can carry into my sorrowful banishment and life-long widowhood!

And, dear heart, do not so bitterly reproach yourself for "the frenzy of that maddening hour," as you justly term it. Had you loved me less, you would have been less wrought up by the catastrophe which clove us asunder.

I have never been offended with you for one moment, never even been displeased with you; only heart-broken and agonized until your dear letter came like a healing balm for the bleeding wounds.

Now, I can bear it.

But, dearest soul, do not let the thought of our lost dream ruin your real life. Our marriage was a mere

ceremony, not a reality; a hope, not a fact; so there can be no moral or religious grounds why you should not relieve yourself of bonds which, if suffered to bind, must keep you from all family ties, all domestic joy.

Oh, it is hard! it is bitter! it is exceeding bitter to be obliged to write this, but—IT IS JUST—that since we two can never meet again in this world, until the supreme hour which must take one of us away from it—IT IS JUST that you should not sacrifice your own prospects and your father's ambitions, by the life of celibacy to which you say you have sentenced yourself. IT IS JUST that you should release yourself from the nominal bonds that bind you to me and find in another and better union the domestic happiness that should be yours.

Nor, dearest heart, do not let any thought of my future trouble you. If I have not found happiness in this sad world, I can find peace and hope in looking to another and better one. But while I remain here, and as long as you let me call myself so, I am, your devoted wife, ELDIVA DAW.

She folded, sealed and directed this letter, and went out and posted it with her own hand to insure its safe dispatch.

When she returned to the tavern she found her companions had come in from their walk, and were waiting tea for her.

"We ordered it early so as to get back to the schooner, which is to sail with the outgoing tide at sunset," Mr. Wells explained.

Immediately after tea the party set out for the wharf, and were soon all snugly on board the *Kitty*, who sailed out of the little port a few minutes after the sun had sunk out of sight behind the distant Virginia hills.

The *Kitty* had a rather rough passage down the river and bay; but at sunrise, on the fifth day of the voyage, she landed her passengers safely.

The sick and weary voyagers went first to the George Washington Tavern to rest and recover from their tossings and nausea before commencing their short land journey to Bloomfield.

A day and night sufficed to recuperate them all, and on the second morning they entered the carriages and wagons that had been sent from the farm to meet them, and set off in procession, by the pleasant road through Neale's Forest to Bloomfield, where they arrived in time for an early tea.

Bloomfield Farm was situated in a deep green basin, surrounded by thickly wooded hills.

A rocky brook ran through it.

The house was a large, roomy, but plain frame building, with white walls, green window shutters, and piazza running all around it from the ground floor to the garret, wreathed with climbing roses, clematis, and honeysuckle, shaded with flowering locust trees, and encompassed with verdant lawns, blooming gardens and fruitful orchards.

To this pleasant farmhouse our travelers came at the close of a beautiful spring day.

It seemed to greet them as a haven of rest.

Old Mr. and Mrs. Wells at once took upon themselves the cheerful duties of host and hostess, and showed their guests in person to their apartments—Mr. Wells attending the gentlemen and Mrs. Wells the ladies.

The bedchambers were all pleasant, white-draped rooms on the upper floors, with doors and windows opening upon the rose and vine-shaded piazzas.

Into one of these "bowers" Eldiva was introduced by Avonia Sothoron.

She was closely followed by little Nea, whose pathetic sympathy had so touched the heart of the discarded bride that she had requested that the child might be allowed to share her room.

Eldiva's large traveling trunk stood in the middle of the room, with Nerissa's little box beside it.

After tea, while the servants were clearing away the table, the company broke up into pairs and trios and strolled about the lawn enjoying the coolness of the evening, the fragrance of the acacia blossoms, and the soft radiance of the moonlight, until it was time to withdraw into the house and retire to bed.

Eldiva, as she laid her head upon her pillow that night, felt more at peace with herself, life, and the Lord, than she had been since that fatal night at the Wolf's Head, when she had enjoyed the highest happiness and suffered the deepest misery that, perhaps, had ever been experienced by any human being. With little Nea at her side she fell asleep in serenity.

The next morning a happy party gathered around the breakfast table, which was set out in the grove on the lawn.

Even Eldiva's spirits rose and she was cheerful; for, unless sin or death overshadow the soul and so darken the scene, there is no resisting the cheering influences of nature in her summer joy—the delicious greenness and freshness of the foliage dancing in the breeze and shining in the light, the brightness and fragrance of the flowers, the gleeful chirp of insects, the rapturous songs of birds—all teaching the pleasant lesson of grateful enjoyment.

Life was delightful at Bloomfield Farm.

The family and friends had scarcely got settled when the country neighbors, with their hospitality, began to call and to give invitations to the incomparable social teas of that neighborhood.

At first Eldiva shrank from meeting any of her old associates.

But Mrs. Roslyn persuaded her to nerve herself to the effort, and receive visits and accept invitations.

Sometimes one or another would congratulate the newly-married young lady, and innocently inquire after Mr. Daw, to be told that he was still in Washington, and to infer that he was detained there by business; for the news of the Wolf's Head calamity had not yet traveled down to Bloomfield, nor were the people thereabout much given to evil thinking or evil speaking.

"They, too, shepherds in Arcadia dwelt."

Eldiva received no other letter from her absent and eccentric husband, yet, being at peace with him though separated from him, she was, to use her own words, "resigned if not happy."

And so the pleasant summers in the country went on, until, from the clear sky upon that cheerful life, fell a thunderbolt in the form of a sudden summons.

It was a fine morning in September, and the family were at breakfast in the grove on the lawn, and Mr. Jubal Wells had just said that they must make the most of the pleasant mornings that remained to them, for that it would soon be getting too chilly to breakfast in the open air, when a horseman rode at full gallop into the lawn and drew rein at the horse-block.

"Why—it is Richard Daly, Lord John Daw's land-

agent!" exclaimed Mrs. Roslyn, in surprise, as the newcomer dismounted, threw his bridle to a negro boy who had run to take it, and approached the breakfasting party.

Mr. Wells arose and went to meet the visitor.

"I am looking for the master of the house," said Daly.

"He is here at your service, sir; what can he do for you?" replied the polite old gentleman.

"You are Mr. Jubal Wells, then?"

"Mr. Jubal Wells."

"And I, Richard Daly," said the visitor, lifting his hat.

"I am glad to see you, Mr. Daly. We are just at breakfast. Will you join us?"

"No, I thank you, sir. I have breakfasted. Can you give me a moment's private conversation *now?* The case is imminent or I would not ask it."

"Certainly, sir. Come with me, if you please," said Mr. Wells, leading the way to the house.

The piazza was unoccupied, and the old gentleman invited his visitor to sit down there.

"I came from Lord John Daw——" began Daly, and then he paused.

"I hope his lordship is well," said the host, politely.

"He is as well as he can hope to be, under adverse circumstances," said Daly, hesitating.

"I trust you bring no bad news," observed the old gentleman.

"Bad news need never surprise any one," sagely remarked the visitor.

"It seems to me, Mr. Daly, that you are trying to prepare me for ill tidings. What are they?" inquired Mr. Wells, controlling the anxiety that began to disturb him.

"I left Washington yesterday morning. I have ridden day and night, changing horses at every post, to bring my message."

"Which proves its great importance, of course. Let us have it at once," said Mr. Wells, little thinking what the message was to be.

"Mr. John Daw—dying!" sighed Daly, solemnly.

"Great ——! Mr. John Daw—dying! That young fellow! Impossible!" exclaimed the old man.

"There, I have shocked you! I thought I should, though I tried to prepare you," said Daly, regretfully.

"You have shocked me! Greatly shocked me! But I can scarcely believe it! *Can* it be possible?"

"It is unhappily too true."

"Dear me! dear me! dear me! Who shall tell his wife?" exclaimed the old gentleman.

"Ah!" sighed Daly.

"Dying! John Daw! That young fellow! What is his disease?" inquired the old gentleman.

"He really does not seem to have any."

"What is he dying of, then?" impatiently demanded Mr. Wells.

"Dr. Hamilton calls it nervous exhaustion, the result of great mental distress from the misunderstanding with his wife. And, sir, he wishes to see her before he dies."

"Dear me! dear me! dear me! But if his low condition is the effect of his distress at his estrangement from his wife the sight of her may—eh?—restore him?"

"The presence of the lady will comfort him, sir, at all events. His restoration, I fear, is beyond human skill or hope. Let me beg you to break this sad news to Mrs. John Daw, for I have been sent to escort her back to Washington."

"Ah! dear me! Who has commissioned you, Mr. Daly?"

"Lord John Daw, at the urgent request of his dying son. Here, sir, is a letter that I had nearly forgotten to present," said Daly, pulling a large, folded paper, with a great red seal, from his pocket.

It was but a short note from Lord John Daw to Mr. Wells, and read as follows:

THE HILL, Washington, May 18.

TO JUBAL WELLS, ESQ.

My Dear Sir:—This will be handed to you by my agent, Mr. Richard Daly. I am sorry to inform you of the extreme illness of my son, who urgently desires to see his wife. Mr. Daly will attend the lady to Washington, if she will do us the favor to come, and to accept his escort. Permit me to advise that no time should be lost, as the danger of a fatal termination to this illness is imminent. With regards to your family, I am, respectfully yours, JOHN DAW.

"These lines are your credentials, Mr. Daly. I will go and prepare my niece, and while she is making arrangements for her journey, I beg you to come in and rest and refresh yourself. When do you wish to start for the city?"

"This very morning, if possible, and just as soon as the young lady can get ready."

"Very well! I will see to the details of your journey. You must have our light carriage and change horses at every post. I do not think I shall let you go, however, under two hours. Go in and refresh yourself! Call for whatever you need. Here, Gideon!"—the old man broke off to beckon a colored servant from the neighbor-

hood of the breakfast-table—"Show this gentleman to a spare room, and remain at his orders."

The darkie approached, bowing obsequiously, and Richard Daly arose and followed him into the house.

Then Mr. Wells, with a deep sigh, went to the breakfast-table, where the family party were anxiously waiting to hear what business had brought Lord John Daw's land agent to the farm.

"Excuse me, dear friends. I will satisfy you after a while," he said, in answer to their eager, questioning looks; "but just now I must speak alone with Eldiva. Come with me, my love."

CHAPTER XV

MEETING AND PARTING

"Come, my love, come to the house with me. I have something to tell you," continued old Mr. Wells, as he drew Eldiva's hand within his arm, and led her through the trees toward the open lawn.

"You have bad news! I see it in your face! What is it? Tell me quickly!" exclaimed the girl, who was pale and trembling.

"Mr. John Daw is not well, my dear, not at all well," began the old gentleman.

"He is ill—he is very ill—dying, perhaps! He has sent for me! I know it! He said he would send for me at last! He said we should meet in death, if not in life! Oh! tell me all; and tell me at once!" impetuously exclaimed the wife.

"My dear, you seem to have divined it all. It is as

you say," replied Mr. Wells, speaking very gently, as he led her up to the piazza and placed her in a chair.

"He is dying, then—dying!" wailed Eldiva, covering her face with her hands, and sinking back in her chair.

"No, no; not so bad as that—not nearly so bad as that!" hastily declared the old gentlman; "but he is ill, and he wishes to see you. Indeed, his illness, so far as I can hear, seems to be more of the mind than of the body, and to be caused by his distress at the estrangement between you. Let us hope for the best. The sight of you will most likely restore him to health."

"Then why are we lingering here?" exclaimed Eldiva, rising hurriedly. "Have you ordered the carriage, uncle? I need not wait to pack. You can have what is needful sent after me!"

"Stay, my dear, one instant. Your escort, Mr. Daly, has been riding hard day and night to bring you this message, and he *must* have an hour or so for rest and refreshment before setting out again."

"Then let some one else escort me—some one who is fresh—Lance Roslyn or Phœbus Verne. I *must* go at once! Two hours' delay may deprive me of the possibility of ever seeing him alive again! Oh! uncle, attend to it. I must start immediately, I say!"

"Very well, my dear! Lance Roslyn shall go with you in the carriage. Daly has a horse and can ride after you, when he is rested. I dare say he will be able to overtake you before you get to Horse Head," said Mr. Wells, as he went, first to give the necessary orders, and then to inform the family of the sudden journey, and its cause.

The journey by water, in Miles Tawney's slow-sailing little craft, by the winding course of the river and bay, occupied about a week, from Washington to Bloomfield.

The journey back by land, in nearly a bee line through the forest, with good horses would take but twenty-four hours at most.

At sunrise of the second day, the travelers crossed the Anacostia Bridge, and entered East Washington just as the young city was waking up to its daily life, and took their way through it, while reveille was beating at the Marine Garrison, and the bells were ringing to call the laborers to work at the Navy Yard government shops.

They drove at a good pace to Capitol Hill, and soon drew up before the stately town house of Lord John Daw.

Eldiva was out of the carriage and up at the door before any one could offer to assist her.

And ere she could raise her hand to knock, the door was suddenly opened, not by the porter, but by a dark-complexioned, humpbacked man, who started violently at the sight of the lady, and then rushing past her without a word, ran down the steps and off toward the outer gate.

"His lordship's secretary, the most eccentric fellow you ever saw in your life!" explained Mr. Richard Daly, as he overtook the young lady and offered his arm to lead her into the house.

"And being eccentric, all the more suitable to be his lordship's secretary!" commented Lance Roslyn, who had only stopped a moment to tell the driver to take the carriage around to the stables and put it up, and then had followed his two companions.

"How is Mr. John Daw?" inquired Richard Daly of the old porter, who was now on duty in the hall, for Eldiva, choked by emotion, could not speak at all.

"Mr. John is very low, sir. The doctor has been here all night."

"Thank Heaven, he still lives?" breathed Eldiva, almost inaudibly, but with a sigh of relief.

"Is he conscious?" inquired Daly.

"At times, sir. He is so just at present, as I have just heard from his lordship's secretary who left him a few minutes ago."

"Thank Heaven!" again breathed Eldiva, and then, having recovered her powers of speech, she turned impatiently to Richard Daly and demanded:

"What are we waiting for? Why do we not go to him at once?"

"Because we must not startle him, my dear young lady."

Eldiva dropped into a chair.

"Where is my lord?" inquired Daly.

"My lord is sitting at the bedside of Mr. John, whom he has scarcely left day or night," replied the porter.

"I will go and tell his lordship that you are here," said Daly, bending to whisper to Eldiva. Then turning to the butler, he said: "Show this lady into the small reception-room, and get her a cup of coffee immediately. She has been traveling all night and needs refreshment."

And as the agent glided swiftly and silently up the thickly-carpeted stairs, the old servant, with a bow, opened a door on the right and saw the young lady into an elegant little apartment, upholstered in dark-blue and gold.

Here Eldiva sank into a deep, restful, cushioned chair, and was directly served by a footman with a fragrant cup of Mocha.

She drank it eagerly, and had just set down the empty cup, when Richard Daly came in to her and said:

"He is better this morning, quite conscious, and suffers no pain. I will take you up to him."

Eldiva arose, and took the man's offered arm, whose support she needed much.

They went upstairs and along the hall on the first floor, from which many doors led into drawing-rooms, library, picture gallery, and bed-chambers.

Mr. Daly opened a door on the right, and ushered his companion into a spacious apartment, upholstered in pale green, not darkened, as sick-rooms generally are, but with all the windows hoisted, the shutters open and the light of the newly risen sun, soft tempered by the half-drawn pale-green silk curtains, pouring in.

In the middle of the room, on a bedstead from which the green silk and lace were lifted high, lay the invalid, propped up with pillows, with both arms lying out languidly over the counterpane, and looking so changed, so pale and wasted, that Eldiva with difficulty suppressed a scream as she beheld him.

There was no one in the room. Lord John had evidently vacated the chair at the head of the bed and left the place to the husband and wife.

And Mr. Richard Daly had closed the door and retired.

Eldiva, with a feeling of awe that the possible presence of death always evokes in thoughtful minds and loving hearts, approached the bed.

John Daw, turning wistful eyes upon her, held out one emaciated hand and said:

"Eldiva, this has killed me."

"No, no—oh, no, no!" gasped the girl, dropping on her knees at the bedside and clasping and covering with kisses the hand that he had held out to her.

"Yes, dear, yes. Look at me, Diva!" he murmured, in a faint voice.

She raised her tearful eyes to his face. How thin and

wan it was! The white light on his forehead was not so deadly white!

"I have been mad, my Eldiva, mad, and, in my madness, hurt you sorely? But it has killed me, my Eldiva, and now you forgive me," he faltered.

"You told me all that in your letter, and I wrote back that I had never blamed you, never been angry with you, and had nothing to forgive," wept the once discarded bride of this dying man.

"Yes, you wrote, dear—you wrote good, precious words! But I long to hear your lips speak them, Eldiva. Speak them with your hands clasped in mine and your eyes meeting mine," he murmured, more faintly than before.

"I love you! I love you! I love you!" she replied, showering kisses and tears on his face.

He did not answer these caresses, and, when she raised her head at last from his bosom, she saw the ghastly face rigid, motionless and unconscious.

"Oh, Heaven, have I killed him! have I killed him!" she exclaimed, frantic with terror, as she glanced around in search of the bell, saw it, rang it violently, and returned to search among the bottles on the table at the bed's head for some restorative.

She found some spirits of ammonia, poured a few drops on her handkerchief, and applied it to his nose.

The door softly opened and Lord John Daw entered the room.

"Oh, my lord, look at him! Look at him! What can we do?" cried Eldiva, beside herself with distress.

"He has fainted again. This is the second time since his first attack. Ah, I feared it would be so, I feared it would be so," sighed the old gentleman, going to the bell

and ringing a second peal that brought nurse and valet into the room.

"Sit down, my dear. You are too unnerved to be anything but a hindrance at this moment," said Lord John to Eldiva, as he led her away from the bed to an easy-chair and placed her in it.

Meantime, the nurse and valet had gone vigorously to work on the fainting man, and, by stimulating friction, succeeded in restoring him.

"It is unfortunate that Dr. Hamilton has just left the house after spending the night here," said the old gentleman with a sigh.

"My lord, my master has just opened his eyes and asked for the lady," whispered the valet, coming softly to his lordship's side.

"Very well; go back to him and continue the friction," said Lord John; and then turning to his daughter-in-law, he whispered:

"You may come and sit by him now and hold his hand, if you will, for that may quiet him; but you must not permit any exciting conversation. You see the danger."

"Oh, I will not! I will not! I will be *so careful!*" replied Eldiva, in a subdued but earnest voice.

"That is right," said Lord John.

"But oh, my lord, tell me—tell me what is his malady?" she anxiously inquired.

"The doctors call it nervous exhaustion, but *I* know it is atrophy of the heart. It is hereditary. My mother, his grandmother, died of it. His cousin, the heir apparent of the dukedom, died of it. Neither I nor my brother or sister have it. The malady seems to have skipped a generation and spared us to kill our children,"

said the afflicted father, who was evidently controlling his grief by a very strong effort.

"Is there *no* hope? None—*none?*" wailed Eldiva, in a half smothered voice.

"I dare not say that. I *hope* there may be hope."

"Oh, Lord John, tell me, tell me, am I to blame for this?" pleaded Eldiva, clasping her hands and lifting her eyes to his face.

"No, my dear, no! Once I naturally believed that you were! But my dying boy has sworn to me that you were innocent and he was mad. I do not know what happened at the Wolf's Head to separate you so suddenly, for he has refused to tell me, and, moreover, he has exacted a promise which I could not refuse to give my dying boy, that I should not seek to discover the cause; but he holds you blameless! and his word to that effect entirely exonerates you. Come, my dear, you may sit beside him and hold his hand now," said the old man, gently.

Eldiva took *his* hand and pressed it warmly to her lips, as she answered:

"Oh, Lord John! I thank you for this! From my heart, I thank you!"

"Suppose you call me father, dear? I have no daughter, and soon, very soon, may have no son," whispered Lord John, as he led Eldiva to the chair at the head of the bed.

She, too much overcome by his last words to be able to speak, made no reply, but sank into her seat and took possession of the wasted fingers that were creeping slowly over the coverlet, seeking hers.

The nurse and valet had both retired from the room and the old gentleman was about to turn away from the bedside, when his son spoke faintly:

"Father, do not go yet!"

"I will not, my boy," replied the old lord, seating himself on a corner of the foot of the bed.

"I want to speak to you of my Eldiva," he breathed, almost inaudibly.

"Yes, my boy, it is all as you wish," said Lord John, bending to catch the faltering words.

"You are reconciled—to my Eldiva, then?"

"Yes, dear lad; yes, I am."

"Father—you know—that I have hurt her, I have—cast—unjust reproach upon her—which may cling—may cling—unless *you* take it away! Only *you* can do that."

"I will, dear boy! I will!"

"You will be a father to her, who has no father."

"I will, my boy! I will!"

"And you, my Eldiva," said the dying man, closing his fingers upon the hand that held them, "you will be a daughter to the old man, who will have no child."

"I will, dearest! I will!" sobbed Eldiva, trying to meet his eyes through the blinding rain of her tears.

"Then I am the more willing to die. Of! if I had my life to live over again, I would try to make everybody happier," said the poor young man, with a sigh of regret over lost opportunities.

"Dear lad! would you like to see the Rev. Mr. Allen?" gently inquired the old lord.

"Yes, I would. And I would like to take the sacrament. Send to him—tell him so. Let him come prepared," answered John Daw.

The old gentleman, instead of ringing for a servant, arose and stole quietly out of the room to give the necessary order.

Eldiva, sitting now at the side of the bed, with her

husband's hand in hers and his eyes resting contentedly on her, felt a strange peace flow into her spirit.

"The present seems like eternal calm," he whispered. "It seems as if we never had been estranged and never could be parted."

She bent and pressed her lips to his, murmuring tender words of assent.

Lord John Daw re-entered the room and seated himself, as before, on the foot of the bed.

The dying man seemed to have fallen into a doze, with his hand clasped in that of his wife.

All was very quiet in the room, until a servant entered silently, stole to the side of his master, and whispered:

"Dr. Ewell and Dr. McWalter are downstairs, my lord."

"The physicians called in consultation with Dr. Hamilton are here; but we must wait until our patient awakes before calling them up to see him," said the old gentleman, in a low voice, to Eldiva.

She bent her head in reply; but the dying man opened his eyes, and said:

"I am not sleeping. I will see the physicians now if you wish."

"Show the doctors up here, Peter," ordered Lord John Daw.

The servant left the room, and all was very still until the entrance of the two physicians.

As Lord John Daw courteously welcomed them, the door was once more opened and the family physician, Dr. Hamilton, who was a minute late, came.

Silent bows were exchanged between the gentlemen, a few words of inquiry were put and answered between the last-mentioned physician and the master of the house relative to the patient, and then Lord John led

his daughter-in-law to the opposite end of the room and left the bedside to the possession of the doctors.

They made their examination, talked a little with each other, and a very little with the patient, all in a quiet and subdued tone, and then they left him, and with bows and waves of the hands to the occupants of the room, they withdrew to the library to hold their consultation.

It was Dr. Hamilton, who was so familiar with the house as to feel almost at home in it, who led them into that sanctum.

The handsome room lay in a rich, subdued, cathedral light, and none of the doctors noticed that behind a curtain in the recess of the bay window sat a dark, humpbacked man, bending over a writing-desk.

The three doctors seated themselves around a table that stood conveniently about midway down the long room.

Here they entered upon the perplexing case of the patient.

The unsuspected witness, the humpback, in the bay window, could not hear all that was said, but he heard quite enough to draw him into eager interest and close attention, and so he was able to get the drift of the consultation.

The patient was surely sinking—death was but the question of a few hours. The disease was an obscure one; the father's opinion that it was an inherited atrophy of the heart was all nonsense. There should be a *post-mortem* examination in the interests of science and humanity. The old lord would never consent to it; but it must be made, nevertheless. The present treatment—stimulation—powerful stimulation—would pro-

long life for a few hours. If he should faint a third time he would never rally again, and so on, and so on.

One of the doctors wrote a prescription, the other two examined it, and approved.

And then they all arose and went out.

The two consulting physicians left the house.

Dr. Hamilton remained, and took the prescription up to the sick-room.

The dark humpback, who had overheard a part of the consultation, leaned his large head upon his hands and ruminated for a long time, and then murmured:

"I begin to see light. Shall I do it? Shall I? Shall I? Would it be justifiable? Yes, I think it would!"

And he wrote a few lines, arose, and left the house.

Meantime Dr. Hamilton had gone to the bedside of his patient, who lay seemingly sleeping, and watched by his father and his wife.

"Where is the nurse?" softly inquired the doctor, with the prescription in his hand.

"We are his nurses. We will never leave him again to the care of any stranger," whispered the father, in reply, and the wife looked up and nodded assent.

"Then send and get this prescription put up, and give it to him as directed," said Dr. Hamilton, and he bowed and left the room.

Lord John Daw followed him into the hall and inquired:

"What is the result of the consultation?"

"Mr. Daw has no disease of the heart whatever!"

"Ah, then, that is better than I thought. That is hopeful. What else? What is his malady?"

"He has none, apparently. He suffers from extreme nervous exhaustion, and just now requires powerful stimulation. There is nothing else to be done."

"Then there is hope?" anxiously inquired the father.

"Certainly there is hope," replied the family physician, telling the benevolent falsehood which is popularly believed to be blotted out by the tears of the recording angel.

And Dr. Hamilton went away, contending with his own conscience that "while there is life there is hope," and, if not in this world, at best in the next.

And the father returned, comforted, to the bedside of his dying son.

"The doctors say that there is no heart disease—nothing but nervous exhaustion. We must stimulate him powerfully, and there is hope," he whispered to his daughter-in-law.

She smiled softly and bowed her head in thankfulness.

At that point a servant entered the room and whispered that the Rev. Mr. Allen had arrived.

"Let him come up," murmured John Daw, in a faint voice.

"We thought you were asleep, dear lad," said the old gentleman.

"No, only resting, quietly resting."

"Are you quite able to see the minister?"

"Quite."

"Then, Peter, ask Mr. Allen please to walk up, and do you take this prescription to Gunther's apothecary shop and get it put up. And be very quick about it, do you hear?"

"Yes, my lord," replied the man, as he left the room.

"Father," murmured the failing man.

Lord John stooped to hear his words.

"Kiss me before the minister comes in."

The old man stooped and pressed his lips to those of his son, which he shuddered to find icy cold.

"Father, for every offense that I have ever given you, I ask your forgiveness now."

"Dear lad! dear lad! you have never offended me in your life. It is I who should ask your forgiveness," replied the old gentleman, much moved.

"Ah, no, a most indulgent father always, who never in your life refused me anything. Kiss me again. We love each other and part in perfect peace, do we not?"

"We meet in perfect peace! We do not part! oh, we do not part!" cried the old man.

"For a little time, yes! only for a little time and then we meet forever. Let Eldiva come to me now, dear father."

Lord John Daw withdrew a little toward his seat at the foot of the bed, and the wife bent over her husband.

"Kiss me, dearest. *You* have already forgiven me. We are one. Hold my hand through all the coming rites until I relinquish yours to take the bread and wine, then clasp my hand again and hold it to the end."

She stooped and dropped kisses and tears that she could not restrain upon his face, and murmured words of infinite tenderness and undying love.

The Rev. Mr. Allen came quietly into the room, and the old lord arose to receive him; led him to the bedside and gave him a chair.

The minister was a slight, pale, grave man of middle-age, and clothed in clerical black cloth.

He shook hands almost silently with the young lady, and then addressed a few words of sympathy and encouragement to the man on the bed.

He talked with him a little while on the Saviour's infinite love and power to save, and then entered upon

the solemn service of the communion, doubly solemn when administered at a death-bed.

Lord John Daw knelt on one side of the bed, Eldiva knelt on the other, holding her husband's hand clasped in her own, and with her head bent upon it.

Only twice she let go that hand, when with the dying man they all took the bread, and again when they took the wine.

After which she clasped his hand again, found it growing cold, and pressed it to her warm bosom while the concluding prayer was made.

She held that cold hand close to her bosom and breathed upon it, while with all her anxious, throbbing heart she followed the words of the minister, and when the prayers were over she bowed her head lower, and pressed her lips upon the icy hand to receive the benediction:

"The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God, and of His Son Jesus Christ, our Lord. And the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, be amongst you and remain with you always. Amen."

With the last word of the benediction, Eldiva lifted her head and looked in the face of her husband.

That face was still and fair; an infinite peace had fallen on it.

Lord John drew near and looked into it.

The minister bent over it.

"Our brother has gone!" said the latter; "his soul has entered into rest through prayer and benediction."

"Oh, my son! my son!" wailed the bereaved father, sinking on his knees, and burying his gray head in the bedclothes.

The minister turned to look at the young widow. She had silently swooned and slipped down upon the carpet. The fasting, fatigue, and excitement of the last thirty-six hours, culminating in this crowning grief, had been too much for her.

The minister raised her reverently in his arms and laid her on a lounge at the opposite end of the room.

Then he went downstairs to find the housekeeper and his lordship's secretary, to tell them what had occurred, and to send assistance to the chamber of death.

He readily found the housekeeper, and dispatched her to her scene of duty; but when he went to the library to look for the secretary, he found only a letter directed to Lord John Daw, and marked "Important and Immediate."

This he took and carried upstairs to await a favorable opportunity of presenting it, in person, to his lordship.

On the upper floor the grave, subdued bustle that follows a death was already beginning.

Lance Roslyn, in his sturdy young arms, was bearing the light unconscious form of Eldiva toward a vacant bedchamber, to which a weeping housemaid, walking before, was showing him.

Lord John Daw, pale, tremulous, crushed and despairing, had come out of the chamber of death and was aimlessly walking up and down the hall.

Mr. Richard Daly, hat and stick in hand, hurried out of a cross passage, and down the front stairs, as if bound upon some important outdoor errand.

The Rev. Mr. Allen looked at Lord John Daw as the latter paced slowly up and down the corridor, his head bowed down to his breast, and his hands clasped behind his back.

Mr. Allen hesitated for a moment, wondering whether or not he should interrupt the old gentleman.

To intrude upon him with any business at such a time seemed almost impertinent. Yet this letter was directed to him, in the handwriting of his private and confidential secretary, and it was marked "Important and Immediate." It required, therefore, prompt attention. It might also serve to divert the afflicted father from the contemplation of his bereavement.

He would give him the letter.

He drew it from his pocket and took it to the old gentleman, saying:

"Pardon me, my lord, for interrupting you at such a time, but in going to the library to look for your secretary I found this letter, which seems to require instant attention."

"Read it to me, then, reverend sir. It is a begging letter, no doubt," said the old gentleman, listlessly.

"I think not. It is directed in the hand of your private secretary, and it may be confidential," said the minister, hesitating to open it.

"Read it to me, my good sir, read it. I have not a secret in the world, and if any one ventures to write secrets to me, they do it at their own proper peril. Read it to me, reverend sir, for unhappily I can no longer see to read myself," persisted the old nobleman, seating himself in a high-backed hall chair and inviting the minister, by a gesture, to follow his example.

Mr. Allen, thus adjured, sat down, opened the letter and read:

"In the Library, Thursday, 11 A. M.

"To Lord John Daw.

"My Lord: I have just received intelligence of the swiftly impending death of my only brother, and am,

therefore, obliged to leave your lordship's service at once, and I fear forever.

"I dare not disturb your lordship at your solemn and anxious watch beside the sick bed of your son, and therefore, I take this way of thanking you heartily for all your kindness to me, and of bidding you, my lord, a most grateful and affectionate farewell.

"Your lordship's obedient servant, R. D."

"Ah! poor, poor fellow!" sighed the old gentleman, as soon as the minister had finished reading the letter. "I am very sorry for him. He, too! Ah! none escape. Death is ever bereaving some one or other. All have to drink of the same dread cup. Poor fellow! It is well that my agent, before leaving the city for Baltimore on Tuesday morning, paid the poor secretary his quarter's salary, for he has left no address. Yes, it is well he got his money."

CHAPTER XVI

THE MOVEMENTS OF THE HUNCHBACK

A FEW moments after the minister had left the house the family physician came on his regular evening visit to his patient.

Hearing from the attendants that John Daw had passed away, and having their words confirmed by the presence of the undertaker's men, Dr. Hamilton asked to see Lord John Daw, and was shown at once into the library, where the bereaved father received the visitor with grave courtesy.

After expressing his sympathy and sorrow at his

death, the doctor delicately entered upon the obscure nature of the malady that had carried off the patient, and hinted, in the cause of science and humanity, the expediency of a *post-mortem* examination.

But at the very first suggestion the fiery old lord exploded into a passion of grief and rage.

Starting from his chair, and trotting up and down the floor, he forbade the physician ever to mention such a plan to him again, protesting that no argument in this world should ever induce him to permit a surgeon's scalpel to profane the dead body of his dear departed son.

What could the doctor do but beg pardon, and entreat the afflicted father to forget that the subject of an autopsy had ever been broached, bid good-afternoon, and leave the irritable old man to recover composure in solitude?

But for Lord John Daw to recover his temper was not, under the circumstances, so easy.

The weather was unusually cool for the third week in September, a circumstance that enabled Lord John Daw to defer the burial of his son's remains until the fourth day after death—a delay that would not otherwise have been permitted, as the expedient of ice caskets had not then been invented.

Mrs. Roslyn, with her little daughter, Nea, arrived in Washington in time for the funeral, and came by invitation immediately to The Hill.

The obsequies of the dead heir were magnificent. In vain had Richard Daly, his lordship's agent, expostulated with his employer against such lavish extravagance. The poor old "millionaire lord," the "mad lord," had replied:

"I would have given *all* to him in life! why not give

a part to him in death?" And then he turned an obstinately deaf ear to all arguments against the squandering of money in vain shows.

One hundred mourning coaches, filled with the élite of the city, the President and cabinet, the diplomatic corps, officers of the army and of the navy, and so forth, followed the hearse to the cemetery, where the body was temporarily deposited in the public vault.

At the gate of the cemetery the funeral guests dispersed, driving off to their various destinations. Mrs. Roslyn went to Shadow Hall, taking with her the young widowed bride and the little blind girl, and Lord John Daw returned alone to his desolate home.

It happened that at the very same moment at which the iron-grated doors of the receiving vault closed upon the remains of young John Daw, one of the consulting physicians on the obscure malady of which he had died, being in the office of the faculty at the Medical College, received a mysterious letter, through the hands of the commonplace postman.

It was to this effect:

"If the professors of the Blank Medical College wish, in the interests of science and humanity, to make an autopsy of the body of the late John Daw, they can have an opportunity of doing so, in a house near the cemetery, at midnight this night. At the present writing the subject is in a perfect state of preservation, and will probably continue so for many hours. The costs for placing the subject in their hands will be one hundred dollars, and the sole condition is that, after the autopsy, the subject shall be reverently replaced in the coffin and returned to the vault.

"The writer of this letter is no common body-snatcher,

nor will he employ any such in this work, though he acts from the mixed motives of profiting himself while benefiting others.

"The learned professors may now consult and make up their minds.

"The writer will call at nine o'clock at night for their answer, and should it be favorable, to conduct them to the place where they may view their subject."

The physician who received this letter—and whom we will call Dr. Lucas, because we are treading upon delicate ground here—turned it about and read it over and over without being able to come to any conclusion.

He was waiting for his brothers of the faculty who were to meet that afternoon to consult upon some college business, and so he resolved to submit the matter of the letter and the proposed autopsy to their judgment, upon the recognized principle, that "in a multitude of counsellors there is safety."

Now letters upon this theme often found their way to the office of the Medical College, but they were generally unclean, inodorous, and ill-spelled, and such as might have emanated from the eminent artists in that particular line—Messrs. Burke and Hare—and they received little or no attention from the faculty.

This was a very different sort of letter and it offered an exceptional temptation—the decorous examination of a subject for the sake of discovering the sources of an obscure disease which had baffled the skill of the physicians, and then the restoration of the body to the coffin and the vault.

Really, "in the interests of science and humanity," the professors of the Medical College thought they must entertain the proposal of their unknown but very plausi-

ble correspondent—or, receive him and hear what he had to say, at the very least.

While this conference was going on in the office of the faculty, another one on the same subject was progressing in the cottage of the keeper of the cemetery.

The sun had set and the cemetery gates were locked for the night.

But the cottage of the keeper, built in the wall, had two outer doors—one front door opening on the road, and one back door opening on the cemetery.

It was twilight in the little office of the keeper, who was a bachelor and lived alone in the cottage. He had just closed his desk, either from want of light or because he had finished his work, or for both reasons, when there came a rap at the outer door, followed immediately by the rather unceremonious entrance of a dark-complexioned, humpbacked man, who at once dropped into the only other chair in the office.

"I hope you have been thinking of what I proposed to you on the part of the professors, Condit?" said the newcomer.

"Mr. Dee, I have; and I can't see my way clear to it. I have been keeper here for five years, and had many a chance offered me, if I would have accepted it; but I never would have nothing to do with grave-robbing!" replied Condit.

"Of course not. It would have been a crime. But this is nothing of the sort. Let me explain. You have only to get the coffin from the vault and into this room at midnight, and allow the doctors to make a neat *post-mortem,* and then return the coffin all right into the vault again," replied the hunchback.

"What do they want a *post-mortem* for?"

"To find out what disease the man died of, so they

may be able to treat and save other people who may have the same symptoms. Don't you see that this is a work of philanthropy you are asked to engage in? Don't you see how many lives may be saved through the knowledge gained by this *post-mortem* examination?"

The hunchback entered into a long argument that need not here be repeated. It is enough to say that he convinced the keeper and secured his assistance in the work of the night.

At eight o'clock that evening Dr. L., having had his tea, sat waiting in his office for the coming of his mysterious correspondent.

The clock had not yet struck the hour when there came a knock at the office door, followed by the entrance of the hunchback.

The doctor looked up in some little surprise at the appearance of his visitor.

The hunchback bowed and said:

"You received a note from me this morning, sir, asking the privilege of an interview at this hour."

"Ah! yes. I have been expecting you. You have come in regard to the——"

"Yes, Doctor."

"Take a chair," said the physician, rising and placing one for the visitor.

"You have read my letter, and——"

"Have concluded to accept your terms. Yes," said the doctor.

"Then—at the gate of the cemetery—at midnight."

"Very well, I will be on hand."

The hunchback arose, bowed, and departed.

"And I never once thought of asking his name," said the doctor to himself.

It was a dark and overclouded night when Dr. Lucas,

with a brother physician and two medical students, reached the gates of the cemetery.

At that moment the front door of the keeper's cottage opened and the keeper himself came out and peered cautiously around.

The four gentlemen as cautiously approached him.

"Hist!" said the keeper.

"Whist!" replied one of the medical students.

"Is it the gentlemen from the college?" inquired the keeper.

"Yes," responded the student.

"Come this way, then, gents, into the house. The great gate can't be opened at this hour," said the keeper, leading the way to the door of the cottage, which seemed in utter darkness.

"Where is the person who wrote me the letter this morning and called at my office this evening?" inquired Dr. Lucas.

"Meaning the—a—gentleman with a—a stoop in his shoulders?" daintily inquired the keeper.

"Yes!—the hunchbacked man!" shortly explained the doctor.

"He is—well—gone on a little business of his own that couldn't get on without him, but he left me an order on your honorable medicarants to treat with me instead of him," said the keeper, opening the door and preceding the gentlemen into the cottage.

He carefully closed the door and bolted it, before he struck a light that revealed the inside of the room.

Every window-shutter was closed and every thick wall-paper blind was drawn down to prevent the least ray of light from gleaming out and betraying the lawless midnight work going on within.

There in the midst of the room, on a long table, stood

a handsome rosewood coffin richly mounted with silver. The top, which was partly removed, bore a silver plate, on which was engraved the following inscription:

JOHN DAW.

Born September 21st, 18—

Died September 23d, 18—

Aged 25 years.

The doctors and their assistants gathered around the coffin. The two students lifted the lid and stood it up against the wall.

Dr. Lucas, at the same time, unfolded the linen winding sheet, revealing the body in its fine white merino shroud; for in those days corpses were not buried "in their habits as they lived," or had lived.

"It is in an excellent state of preservation," whispered Dr. Lucas. "How very natural it looks—only a little whiter than I saw it last a few hours before death. Lend me a hand here."

The two students took hold of the coffin and drew it to the edge of the table. Then they lifted out the body and laid it on the table, and removed the coffin and stood it up against the wall.

The doctors drew near. Dr. Lucas gently raised the shoulders of the "subject," while one of his assistants drew off the sleeves of the shroud, for not even that was to be mutilated. The autopsy was to be conducted with all consideration and reverence.

When the arms, chest and shoulders were uncovered, the doctor gently lowered the body on the board again and held out his hand to his second assistant, who stood by with an open case of instruments.

The student selected a fine-tempered scalpel and gave it to his preceptor.

The doctor beckoned his companions, who approached and looked over him as he began to work. He laid down his instrument for an instant, and, with his fingers, tenderly parted the blonde hair on the white brow, and called the attention of his companions to the strangely livid, snow-white spot or "blaze" in the middle of the forehead, which he said that the family of the deceased had always associated with the obscure, hereditary malady which was supposed to have carried off this young man.

"I have never seen such a phenomenon on the face of any other person, nor can I attempt to connect it with the disease, or to account for it in any manner, though the present investigation may throw some light upon the subject."

So saying, Dr. Lucas picked up his scalpel again, and, parting the hair with his left fingers, began to cut through the scalp preparatory to laying open the brain.

But scarcely had the edge of the instrument incised the skin when the doctor started back and dropped the scalpel with every expression of surprise and dismay.

The body had shuddered at the cut! The wound had bled! The scalpel was red!

"What's amiss?" inquired Dr. Morris, while the two students looked on in perplexity.

"The man is not dead," breathed Dr. Lucas, with a long-drawn sigh.

"Not dead? He was as cold as ice and nearly as hard when we handled him," said the elder student, staring from the speaker to the subject.

"*That* he was," asserted the other student.

"Look, then! See!" exclaimed Dr. Lucas, pointing to the bleeding flesh wound on the scalp.

"By Jove, it is a fact!" cried the first student.

"The poor fellow is certainly alive!" said the second student.

"Come, come, no time must be lost in trying to restore him!" said Dr. Morris, taking the wrist of the unconscious man and feeling his pulse.

"Here, Keeper Condit! Come here!" called Dr. Lucas, recovering his self-possession.

The keeper crept out from some obscure corner of the room, and, trembling, approached the group of doctors that were gathered around the table with the body extended upon it.

"Great goodness, gentlemen! what is all this about?" demanded the affrighted keeper.

"If you have any brandy about the premises bring it here quickly," ordered Dr. Lucas.

"Ye-ye-yes, sir, but what does it all mean?" inquired the terrified keeper, as he darted to a corner cupboard and produced a black bottle.

"It means that this man we thought dead still lives, and if we can restore him living to his father your everlasting fortune is made!" answered one of the young students, as he snatched the bottle from the keeper's hand and passed it over to his preceptor.

"Oh, gentlemen, the old lord will ruin me for my share in this, if it ever should come to his knowledge!" wailed Condit.

"He might have done so 'if it had ever come to his knowledge' under other circumstances; but under *these* he will reward you. This happy accident may restore his son and make your fortune."

"Lord grant it, gentlemen!" said the poor fellow,

trembling in what the doctors thought an inexplicable manner.

"Is there a bed on this floor?" inquired Dr. Morris.

"In the next room, gentlemen," said the keeper, throwing open a side door and giving a view of a neat bedchamber.

There they immediately bore the body of the living but unconscious man, and there they applied all the restoratives at hand for his recovery.

It was a quarter after twelve when their experiments commenced. It was two o'clock before the man breathed freely, but he was still unconscious.

Then, after a short consultation between the two doctors, it was determined to remove the patient to the house of Dr. Morris, which was the nearest at hand, and where he might be treated privately for the present, until it could be ascertained whether he would live or die; for it would be a needless cruelty, as they said, to make known his resuscitation to his afflicted father unless that resuscitation was to go on to full recovery.

Dr. Morris was a childless widower, living quite alone, and attended only by colored slaves who loved and revered him to that extent that his word was absolute law and gospel to them; so that his private patient would remain a dead secret in his house.

A bier was borrowed from the cemetery, and a bed made upon it.

The patient was carefully lifted and carried out and stretched upon it, and covered with a dark quilt. Then one of the strong young medical students took the fore-handles, and the other one the back-handles, and they bore him away from the keeper's cottage, down the lane that led along the cemetery wall toward the Navy Yard Hill.

Dr. Lucas walked before to see that the way was clear.

Dr. Morris walked behind to guard to rear.

And so they crept along "in the dead waste and middle of the night" and through the dense double darkness of the hour and the clouds, unperceived and unsuspected, they passed on, and arrived at Dr. Morris's house, where, in a chamber at the top of the house, they deposited their strange patient.

There, for many days, the son of Lord John Daw, and the heir of his uncle's dukedom, hovered between life and death, tended by the best medical skill in the city.

In the meantime the old lord, ignorant of what had occurred, and unable to bear the loneliness and desolation of his own magnificent home, was making preparations for an extensive tour over the whole of the habitable world—or the practicable part of it. He even meditated a voyage to Terra-del-Fuego. But his first goal was to be Egypt and Asia Minor.

He meant to start on his long journey just as soon as he had removed the remains of his son from the receiving vault in which they had been temporarily laid, and deposited them in the grave that was to be their final resting place.

His old valet was to attend him in his journey, and his housekeeper was to be left in charge of The Hill, and his agent in care of his estate.

He had advertised for a traveling secretary and amanuensis to accompany him, but as yet had met no satisfactory response.

His young daughter-in-law, Eldiva, went to see him every day. He received her always with affection, but never asked her to prolong her visit or to repeat it.

When he first told her of the projected tour around the world, by which he had hoped to distract his grief, he added that he had taken care to provide for *her* wants by placing twenty-five thousand dollars to her account in the United States Bank at Philadelphia, which she might draw upon at sight; and that he had made a new will, in which he had left to her The Hill, and revenues to keep it up.

Poor Eldiva answered her father-in-law that, while she was very grateful for his munificence, she cared much more for his affection than for his money, and that she would be best pleased if he would only allow her to travel with him around the world, and wait on him and nurse him and amuse him as if she were indeed his daughter. She said that love should teach her to serve him better than his valet, and to help him more than his secretary, and to divert him more than either.

The desolate old father smiled sadly as he thanked her for her zeal, but answered her that she did not understand the case. The long tour was not a suitable one for a young lady to undertake, even under the protection of her old father-in-law. A woman, instead of being a help and solace, under such circumstances, would only be a burden to herself and a care to him. But he appreciated her devotion. Women had always been unlucky, *very* unlucky, to him, he added, so that he had grown superstitious in regard to them. But he now loved and esteemed his sweet daughter-in-law, notwithstanding.

So the proposal ended.

One morning, early in the month of October, a message was brought to the young widow from her father-in-law, that on the next morning he should call for her to accompany him in his carriage to the cemetery, whither he was going to superintend the removal of his deceased

son's remains from the receiving vault to the grave which had been prepared for them.

This message revived all the freshness and poignancy of the girl's first grief, and threw her into a paroxysm of hysterical tears and sobs; but in the midst of them she returned an answer that she would be ready to attend her father-in-law at the appointed time.

Accordingly, the next day at ten o'clock, Eldiva, clothed in the deepest mourning, sat waiting in the front parlor for the call of Lord John Daw.

A few minutes before the hour struck, a mourning coach, drawn by four black horses, drew up before the house, and the old lord, clothed in black from head to foot, and with a deep crape band on the hat which he carried in his black-gloved hand, descended and entered the door that was already opened for him.

Eldiva arose to meet him, and sank sobbing on his breast.

He kissed her in trembling silence, and then drew her arm under his own, and led her out and put her into the coach.

As soon as they were seated, side by side, the horses started at a slow pace toward the east.

An hour's drive brought them to the cemetery, the broad gates of which were thrown wide open to let the mourning-coach pass in.

They drove down the main avenue to the receiving vault, where the Rector of Christ Church, the sexton, and a squad of assistants were awaiting the party.

"Where is the keeper?" inquired Lord John Daw of the man nearest to him, as his lordship alighted and handed his daughter-in-law from the carriage.

"Mr. Condit, sir, is extremely ill at the City Hospital,

and I have been acting for him ever since he was taken there," answered the man, respectfully lifting his hat.

"And who are you, pray?"

"My name is Evans, sir, and I am one of the assistants here," replied the man, with another bow, as he produced the key of the vault and began to unlock the door.

The door of the vault was now open and the squad of assistants filed in and reverently brought out the coffin and laid it on the hand-bier, which four of the men immediately raised to carry it to the grave.

The minister walked ahead, as in an ordinary funeral. The father, with the widow on his arm, followed behind.

The distance was short.

As soon as they reached the spot the men sat down the bier and prepared to lower the coffin into the grave, when the father lifted up his hand and said:

"Stop!"

The men stopped and all looked at the old man.

"I must look upon the face of my dear son once more before the earth hides it. Open the coffin," he said, in a solemn voice of authority.

The bearers looked from one to another and hesitated to obey him.

"My *dear* Lord John, my *good* friend," expostulated the rector, "will this be wise? Will not this be an ordeal too severe, too distressing for you and—for this lady?"

"It will not be so for *me!* If it should be so for *her*—you can lead her away before the lid is lifted," replied the old man.

But Eldiva clung to the arm of her father-in-law, hiding her face on his shoulder.

The men meanwhile had drawn the screws, and now, as they lifted the lid, the old lord, with a heavy groan,

bent over the coffin, to take that last look at the face of his dead son for which he had so desperately striven.

But the groan was instantly succeeded by such a cry of horror and indignation from the aged lips as startled every one present and caused Eldiva to lift her head, and all to look where he was pointing, to see what could be the matter.

Exclamations of amazement and consternation burst from every beholder, as well there might.

The coffin contained no human body, but a load of about a hundred and fifty pounds of soft earth!

"Who has committed this outrage! WHO?" demanded the old man in a paroxysm of rage and despair.

"My dear friend, let me relieve you of the lady. See! she has fainted! She is falling!" exclaimed the Rev. Mr. Allen, receiving the form of the young widow in his arms as she was slipping from the hold of her father-in-law.

"Thank you. No, not fainting. Just help me to a seat—and—never mind me," murmured Eldiva, in an expiring voice, as, pale and trembling, she permitted the rector to take her to the nearest bench, where he left her leaning against the trunk of the oak tree which overshadowed it.

The rector returned to the side of the old lord, who was still shaking with grief and fury.

"Answer me, you fellows! WHO has committed this atrocious crime?" demanded of the panic-stricken sexton and grave-diggers who stood around.

"Lord in heaven knows, gentlemen all, I don't know no more about it than the babe unborn!" answered the sexton, and his companions followed suit, in words to the same effect.

"*You,* sir! What is your name, who are staying here in the keeper's place? What is your name?"

"Evans, my lord."

"You, Evans, then! How long have you been acting here?"

"Ever since the keeper was taken to the City Hospital, three days ago, my lord."

"Then you could have had nothing to do with this outrage, which must necessarily have been perpetrated within a few hours after the coffin was deposited in the vault."

"Nothing on earth to do with it, Heaven truly knows, my lord."

"How long was the keeper ill before he was carried to the hospital?"

"Well, my lord, not more than a day or two."

"Then *he* is implicated in this felony! *He* had the keys of the receiving vault, and they could not have been obtained but through him! I will see that man and question him! Here or in the hospital ward, sick or well, he shall answer me, and give up his confederates! I know already whom to suspect, and if I can but bring the crime home to the real criminals, by all my hopes of Heaven, I will prosecute them, be they whom they may, to the utmost extent of the law. I swear I will not leave the country until I have seen them all in the State Prison. Come, my poor Eldiva. Let us return home."

CHAPTER XVII

THE TEST—THE TRIUMPH

Lord John Daw drove back again to Shadow Hall, where he left his distressed daughter-in-law in the care of her friends, and then he drove to the City Hospital, which he reached at an early hour of the afternoon.

He alighted and passed through the middle front door, which he found open, and then knocked at a side door in the hall which led into the office of the house physician.

That functionary soon made his appearance, and recognizing in the visitor one of the most wealthy and munificent of the patrons of the hospital, he bowed, and said:

"Ah, good afternoon, my lord. I hope your lordship is quite well. Pray walk in and sit down, my lord."

The old gentleman nodded and followed his conductor into the office, and sat down in the chair that was handed him.

"How can I have the honor of serving your lordship?" inquired the young house physician.

"Have you got a man here named Condit—the superintendent of the Congressional Burying Ground?" abruptly inquired Lord John.

"Yes, my lord; came in a few days ago; bad case of typhoid fever, my lord; quite delirious at times."

"Ah! I would like to see him."

"See him? Condit?"

"Yes, *now!*"

"He is quite delirious," respectfully suggested the house doctor.

Lord John was greatly disappointed, but he had to submit to the inevitable, and postpone his interview with Condit. He quietly withdrew from the hospital, resolving, however, to call again the next day and try to repeat his experiment.

He re-entered his coach, and returned to The Hill in time for his solitary dinner.

Before Lord John Daw had another opportunity of seeing Condit the man had passed away from all earthly interviews.

Early the next morning Lord John Daw drove out to the hospital, and was met, as before, by the house physician.

"How's the man Condit?" inquired his lordship.

"He's gone, my lord; passed away at sunrise this morning," gravely replied the doctor.

"Ah! I'm sorry!—very sorry!"

He remained standing in deep thought for a few moments, and then he left the hospital, re-entered his carriage and drove home.

There, when he had exchanged his coat for a dressing-gown, and had refreshed himself with a glass of wine and a biscuit, he lay down on a library sofa and sent for his confidential agent, Mr. Richard Daly.

"Richard," he said, when the gentleman made his appearance, "I mean to prosecute those scoundrels who have violated the sanctuary of the dead! You are a lawyer and you must help me to do it, and tell me first of all how to begin."

"Why, my lord, under correction, I should say, begin as the receipt to cook a hare begins—'first catch your hare,'" said Daly, with a demure smile.

"What do you mean by that? What do you mean by that?" quickly inquired Lord John.

"We must find the men who robbed the vault before we can do anything else. And as yet we have not the least clew."

"Ah! no matter who they may be, when I find them I will prosecute them to the utmost extent of the law!" exclaimed the old lord, savagely, as he started from his lounge and began to trot up and down the floor with his black silk dressing-gown sailing behind him.

Daly watched him in silence until the door was opened by a footman, who brought in a card to his master.

Lord John Daw took it, threw himself down into a chair by the table, and squinted at the pasteboard for a few minutes and then handed it over to his agent, saying:

"Do you read it, Richard! My sight grows worse and worse! Who is it, Richard?"

Daly took the card and read as follows:

"George Hamilton, M. D. On important business connected with the late violation of a vault in Congressional Cemetery."

"Ah! Dr. Hamilton! He has heard—he has heard something! I will see him! I will see him at once! Show the doctor up into this room immediately," said the old gentleman, speaking first to his agent, and last to his footman.

"You never suspected your own family physician of such a——" began Daly, but Lord John cut him short.

"Hamilton? Suspect Hamilton? I should sooner suspect you, or myself! No, he was very anxious to have an autopsy, and he put me into a passion by pressing for one: but he is simply incapable of bribing a

keeper of the cemetery for such a purpose! No! What brings him here is that he has made some discovery and has to tell me something very painful, I fear," said the old lord, with a deep sigh.

A few minutes later Dr. Hamilton was ushered into the library, and advanced to the table at which the old lord and his agent sat waiting.

Lord John Daw arose with grave courtesy and held out his hand, saying:

"I am pleased to see you, Doctor."

The physician shook hands with the old nobleman, bowed to the agent, and then sat down.

"You—you—wished to see me on important business, I believe?" said Lord John Daw, who was scarcely able to restrain his impatience to learn *any* news of his lost treasure.

"Yes, my lord, when your lordship is disengaged," replied Dr. Hamilton, with a glance at the agent.

"Ah! you—you would like a private interview?"

"Yes, my lord, certainly, but *only* at your lordship's and this gentleman's convenience," replied the doctor.

"Ah, yes! but we have got through, I think, Richard, and I will not detain you longer," said Lord John, politely.

But the agent had already risen and was bowing his adieux.

And Lord John Daw and his visitor were left alone together.

We must go back for a few days in our story to relate some events which led up to the sudden visit of Dr. Hamilton to Lord John Daw.

After the resuscitated body of Lord John's son had been secretly conveyed to the house of the widower, Dr. Morris, on the Navy Yard Hill, carefully carried up to

a third-story bedroom and laid upon a comfortable bed, the doctors gathered around him, made a thorough examination of his case, administered restoratives, and, while watching their effect held a consultation on this strange case.

They decided that the recovery of the patient was so extremely doubtful that it would be cruel and dangerous to inform the bereaved father of his "deceased" son's resuscitation, unless it should go on to full recovery; for if the young man were to die after all, it would be much better that the father should be spared the torture of going through the ordeal of bereavement a second time.

The doctors devoted themselves with all their skill, knowledge and experience to the restoration of their patient—one of them being always on the watch while the others were with their families or visiting their patients.

Dr. Morris, who had the strange case in special charge, was also assisted by the two faithful old negro servants, Len and Cassy, who would have died rather than betray the confidence of their master.

It is not necessary to dwell upon this "remarkable case of resuscitation," as it was afterward called.

It is enough to say that every physician in the city, being confidently informed by one of the doctors in the secret, came in turn to look at the patient and consult with his attendants.

But the recovery was for many days so doubtful and so tedious that nearly a fortnight from the day of resuscitation had passed before the utmost power of medical skill could raise the patient to a degree of strength and sense to enable him to recognize persons and answer questions.

Among the outside physicians who had been entrusted with the secret was Dr. Hamilton, the medical attendant of Lord John Daw.

Dr. Hamilton had shown less surprise at the fact of the resuscitation than any one else who had heard of it; but he felt great anxiety that the case should go on to full recovery.

He agreed with the other doctors that it would be inexpedient to inform the father of the son's strange condition, unless it should end favorably in the complete restoration of the patient.

He was also among the most devoted and indefatigable of the young gentleman's attendants.

It was on the morning of the thirteenth day that the patient awoke to full consciousness; though his first words savored somewhat of dream or delirium.

"Mother?—are you there?"

Dr. Hamilton, who was sitting by his side, bent over him and said:

"*I* am here, Mr. Daw. How do you find yourself?"

The patient looked at the speaker long and fixedly, and seemed to try to collect his thoughts.

"Do you know me, my dear young friend?" gently inquired the doctor.

"You—I—you are—Dr. Hamilton," replied the patient, somewhat confusedly.

"Exactly! Your old, familiar family physician. How do you find yourself, Mr. Daw?"

"I—hardly know."

"Certainly; and you shall not be troubled to try and find out. What you want now is refreshment."

And the doctor rang the bell and gave the order, while the patient fell into a gentle doze.

Such was the manner of the young man's return to consciousness at the crisis of his illness.

This crisis had passed safely, and the convalescence followed.

He grew better day by day. He had no knowledge or suspicion that he had ever been supposed to be dead, still less that he had been coffined and confined in a vault.

He evinced but little curiosity concerning his situation, only once inquiring of Dr. Hamilton how it was that he found himself in a strange house instead of his father's home.

And Dr. Hamilton told him no falsehood, but a veiled truth, when he replied that they had brought him to this house to insure quiet, fresh air, and constant medical assiduity.

"I haven't the least recollection of the journey," said the young man, with a sigh of weariness.

"No, my dear sir, you were in a state of perfect unconsciousness when we brought you hither by gentle stages," replied the doctor.

"And my father? How did he like this removal?"

"It was absolutely necessary to your recovery that you should be brought here and—his lordship did not object."

"Whose house is this?"

"The house of Dr. Morris, on Navy Yard Hill."

"Oh!" said the patient, as he sank into the silence of weariness.

A little later he inquired:

"Has my father been to see me very often?" Then, without waiting for an answer to the first question, he demanded:

"When will he come next?"

"Lord John Daw will come to see you to-morrow morning," said Dr. Hamilton, who had fully determined that now, at length, the father should be notified of his son's continued existence.

The time for the revelation seemed surely to have arrived, for not only was the convalescence of the patient a certainty, but events had occurred within the last twenty-four hours that made this revelation a necessity —the theft of the body from the vault had been discovered by the father himself, who, on going to the cemetery to superintend the final interment, had insisted on having his son's coffin opened, and had then found it filled with earth and gravel. The distress of the father was known to be poignant.

Following soon upon the event was the death of the keeper, which also facilitated affairs, for there was no question *now* of his suffering for his complicity, at least in this world.

And so Dr. Hamilton promised the patient that his father should come to visit him the next morning, and he privately resolved to go and break the tremendous news of his son's resuscitation to Lord John Daw, and prepare the old man for the momentous meeting.

He called a consultation with his brother physicians, and found, as he had confidently expected to find, that they all coincided with him in opinion as to the expediency of immediately announcing the news of Mr. John Daw's resuscitation and recovery to his father, for that now it would be even safe and desirable to have the convalescent sent to his own home.

That afternoon Dr. Hamilton went to The Hill and requested an interview with Lord John Daw.

As soon as he found himself alone with the old noble-

man he began to prepare the way for his revelation by saying:

"I grieve to hear that you made a very sad discovery at the cemetery yesterday."

"Yes, a heart-rending crime has been committed, which I only live to punish!" passionately exclaimed the old man.

"Are you quite sure that there was a robbery?" gently inquired the doctor.

"Quite sure? Why, sir, I saw it! The casket had been opened, the jewel stolen, and its place filled with earth and stone! Sure? Yes, as sure as that I shall bring those atrocious scoundrels to the State Prison if it should cost my whole living!" exclaimed the old lord, bringing his fist forcibly upon the table.

"My lord," said Dr. Hamilton, in a grave and gentle tone, "I hope you will bear with me while I assure you that I do not believe any harm has been done."

"No harm done! Do you take me for a child, or a fool, Hamilton, that you talk to me in this way?" irascibly inquired the old lord.

"I begged you to be patient while I spoke——"

"You wrote on your card that you came to see me on business connected with that robbery. Now, then, Doctor, have you found out anything?"

"Yes, my lord, I think so. I think I can tell you where you may find your son's body as whole and as sound and in as good a state of preservation as when it was first laid in the casket."

"Eh? What? Is that true? My dear son's sacred remains are unmutilated, intact, and may be recovered! Oh, Doctor, is that really so?" demanded the old gentleman, in great agitation.

"That is really true. And now, my lord, I am obliged

to put to the test your lordship's trust in me and your love for your son."

"What in the deuce do you mean, Hamilton?"

"Whether love is stronger than pride. Whether, for the sake of having your son's body returned this evening, you will deny yourself the gratification of pride and vengeance and let the mistaken men who opened the casket go free, since they really have not hurt a hair of the young man's head," said Dr. Hamilton, persuasively.

"I—I—I—would like to hang them all!" blowed the old lord, pulling out his pocket handkerchief and wiping his red face and silvery head.

"I am sorry to hear you say so, my lord, for I have this to tell you—that the men who have possession will restore the body intact whether you pardon or prosecute them. They will do their duty," gravely replied the doctor.

"I would like to know," sarcastically observed the old man, returning and throwing himself into his chair, "what powerful influence has been brought to bear upon the gentlemen of the body-snatching profession to induce them, after they had robbed the vault, to voluntarily offer to restore their booty unconditionally."

"Can you not imagine, Lord John Daw, some circumstances under which an autopsy might be arrested at the first incision of the scalpel?"

"No, I can't! I have no imagination at all!"

"Then I must help you by mentioning some instances in history and in contemporary times. You recollect a very recent case of a young girl dying, or appearing to die, under such strange circumstances that a *post-mortem* examination was ordered to be made on the morning after the death, or the apparent death, and——"

"Yes, I remember; she was Dr. Geddis's patient; and when the doctors went to dissect the body they found the pulse beating feebly, and they brought her round by the electric battery!" eagerly exclaimed the old lord, gazing with devouring interest and anxiety into the face of the speaker and breathlessly waiting for—he knew not what revelation.

"And the girl lived to marry and bear two children," added the doctor.

"Yes, yes, oh, my head! Yes; but what do you mean? Great Heaven! What? what? Oh! man, speak plainly, for the love of mercy, speak plainly!" cried the old lord, shaken almost to the verge of dissolution.

The doctor stepped quickly to a side-table on which were decanters of wine and glasses. He filled a glass with strong old port and brought it to the old lord, saying:

"Drink this; and now, while you do so, I will tell you that I have spoken very plainly and intelligibly to you, and your lordship understands that your son's case is like the one I have mentioned—a case of resuscitation after supposed death. Yes, my lord, the first touch of the surgeon's knife drew a little blood and revealed the fact to all the group gathered around the body."

But for the good old port wine he had swallowed, and which sent a warm, strong glow throughout his failing frame, Lord John Daw must have succumbed to his emotions and dropped to the floor, so terribly was he shaken.

"*Is* it true? Oh, Heaven, do not mislead or deceive me! Can it be true? My son not dead after all!"

"It is absolutely true. You may prove the truth for yourself before the sun sets."

The old lord sank back in his chair gasping for breath.

Dr. Hamilton poured out a second glass of port wine and persuaded the old man to drink it.

"*Where* is he now? *How* is he now?" demanded Lord John Daw.

"He is at the house of Dr. Morris, on the Navy Yard Hill, to which he was conveyed as soon as it was ascertained that he was alive. He has received the best possible treatment, and is now in a fair way of recovery."

"Thank Heaven! Oh, thank Heaven! My son! my son! my dear son! living! recovering! Oh, what joy! We will go to him at once!" exclaimed Lord John Daw, rising and ringing the bell.

A servant quickly responded.

"Have the carriage at the door as soon as possible," said his lordship.

The servant bowed and withdrew.

"Tell me, how long has my son been lying ill at Dr. Morris's?"

"Ever since the night after the funeral, when he was first conveyed there."

"Tell me all about the attempted theft—and—the resuscitation!" eagerly demanded the old lord.

The doctor related all the particulars of the attempted *post-mortem* examination, and the completed resuscitation as it is known already to the reader, omitting only the names of those who were concerned in the adventure.

"Why was I not informed of my son's resuscitation when it took place, a fortnight ago?" naturally inquired the old gentleman.

"Because, my lord, we did not expect the resuscitation to reach full recovery, and we thought it would be a most bitter trial for you to see your son as we saw him,

living, indeed, but showing no sign of life or consciousness for days. We gave him the best attention that ever was bestowed on any man, of any rank, before, and now, at the end of two weeks, we have restored him to consciousness and convalescence. Since we have done this, I have lost no time in coming to announce to you the happy result."

"Oh, it is too much!—too—much joy!"

"I must warn your lordship of one thing. Your son does not know, or even suspect, that he was ever supposed to be dead, or ever put into a coffin; therefore, I must beg you not to mention these circumstances in his hearing," said Dr. Hamilton.

"I will not. But how does *he* account for the fact of his being in a strange house?"

"We told him that he was brought thither while in a state of unconsciousness that he might have deeper quiet, purer air, and more exclusive medical attention than he could possibly gain at home."

"How does he account for my absence from his bedside all this time?"

"My lord, he does not know that you have been absent. He takes it quite for granted that you have visited him almost daily during the long period of his unconsciousness. And he expects to see your lordship to-morrow."

"To-morrow! as if I could wait for to-morrow! My *dear* son! My dear, noble, generous boy! Oh, is it possible that you will be so soon, so fully restored to me? Ah, my whole life's devotion to good works will scarcely be enough to prove my gratitude to Heaven for this great mercy."

"The carriage is ready, my lord," said the footman, opening the door.

"Very well. Run up to my wardrobe and bring down my black coat."

The servant bowed and withdrew.

"I hope, under such happy auspices, your lordship may feel disposed to pardon those mistaken men, who, in the interests of medical science and human life, only wished to make an autopsy, and meant to have restored the body to the vault, really uninjured. I hope you will feel disposed to pardon them."

"'Pardon them!' Why, certainly I will pardon them! Nay, indeed, I will reward them! Have they not restored to me my son—my dear son? Man! I could find it in my heart to *love* them!"

"Your coat, my lord," said the servant, re-entering the library.

"Help me on with it *here,* and be quick about it, too!"

The old lord made his hasty toilet in the library, and when it was completed he went down, accompanied by Dr. Hamilton, entered the carriage, and gave the coachman orders to drive to Dr. Morris's, on the Navy Yard Hill.

The horses were started at a good pace.

To say that the old gentleman was deeply moved would but faintly describe his real state.

With all the tender caution that the physician had used in communicating the startling news of the son's resuscitation to the bereaved father, Lord John Daw's mind and body had been shaken almost to the verge of insanity or death.

He leaned back now in the corner of the carriage, quite overcome and occasionally passing his hand over his brow, or pinching his arm as if he had a secret suspicion that he was dreaming.

Then he would suddenly break out with—

"Great Heaven! Can this be true, or—am I going crazy?"

Dr. Hamilton did not answer him until he himself was directly spoken to.

"Man! Friend! *Am* I happy or only hallucinated? Are you taking me to my son—my living, breathing son, or are you, perhaps, taking me to a lunatic asylum?"

"Compose yourself, my lord! Do not give way to these fancies! Your lordship knows very well that you are going to see your son, though it may seem difficult, under the circumstances, to realize the fact," replied Dr. Hamilton, in the cool, serene, practical tone that was sure to act as a sedative to the excited nerves of the old man.

The latter sank back in his seat and showed no further sign of agitation except the slight tremor that shook his frame, and the occasional passage of his delicate hand across his brow, until the carriage reached the Navy Yard Hill, and drew up before the handsome house of Dr. Morris.

CHAPTER XVIII

LIFE AND JOY

Before they left the carriage, Dr. Hamilton deemed it right to warn Lord John again.

"I understand! I understand! I am not a child!" testily exclaimed the old gentleman, as he slowly and carefully stepped down to the sidewalk.

Dr. Hamilton smiled as he gave Lord John his arm to

help him to climb the half a dozen steps that led up to the entrance of the house, and rang the bell.

The door was opened by the factotum of the establishment, a middle-aged colored man named Len, who bowed silently as he waved his hand for the visitors to enter.

"Is Dr. Morris in his office now?" inquired Dr. Hamilton, as they passed in.

"No, marse—gone to de City Hospital, sah," replied the negro, with another low bow.

"How is Mr. Daw this afternoon?"

"Oh, a great deal better, marster. I hab just took him up a bowl ob strong beef soup, and he hab eat up de whole ob it, marster. Him's in de best ob sperrits, too, 'specting ob his farder to come, and see him; and wen de bell rang just dis minute ago, he told me to run right down to see who'd come, and if as how it was his farder, to fetch de gentleman right up to his room. Oh, him's a heap better, marster, I tell yer!" answered the loquacious negro, grinning from ear to ear.

"Dear boy! Dear boy!" hastily exclaimed the anxious father, nervously twisting his fingers. "Let us go to him at once—at once, Doctor!"

"Yes, we will go now, for he needs not to be told that you are here. He is evidently expecting you momentarily," replied the doctor, as he drew the old man's arm within his own and helped him to climb the two flights of stairs that led to the upper floor.

There, in a light, cool bedroom filled up with maple wood and white dimity, Lord John found his son lying on a clean, fresh, white bed, his handsome blonde head reposing on a pile of snowy pillows, and his fine though emaciated form lightly covered by a white counterpane.

The large blue eyes—looking preternaturally large

from the thinness and pallor of the face—were eagerly turned toward the door as the visitors opened it.

"Is that my father?" inquired the patient, in a weak but excited voice.

"Yes, my boy! My dear, dear boy, it is I! Oh, thank Heaven! Thank, thank Heaven!" cried the trembling but overjoyed old man, as he tottered toward the bed and sank down beside it to grasp and kiss the hands of his recovered son.

"Sit in the resting-chair beside me, dear father," said the son, feebly trying to raise the old gentleman to his feet—a task far beyond his strength.

"And how do you find yourself this afternoon? Eh, dear lad, tell me!" said Lord John, seating himself on the armchair at the bed's head, and turning it around so that he could closely see his son.

"Oh, I am better, so much better! Out of all danger now."

"Thank Heaven! Thank Heaven!" warmly responded the old man.

"I suppose I have been very ill," thoughtfully murmured the invalid.

"Yes, you *have* been very ill. But that is past, and you are all right now, thank Heaven!" fervently exclaimed Lord John.

"Father," murmured his son, with a keen and wistful look, "*are* you really very glad to know that I am better—that I am getting well?"

"Glad! glad! Oh, my dear boy! my dear, dear boy! How can you ask such questions of me—of *me*, who have been quite heartbroken, crushed to the dust by your——"

"HEM!"

The interruption came from Dr. Hamilton, who,

standing at one of the white-curtained front windows, cleared his throat with rather a loud sound.

The old man remembered himself and amended his phraseology:

"How can you doubt that I am overjoyed at your recovery knowing, as you must know, that I have been reduced to despair by your long and dangerous illness?"

"Yes, you really *are* happier to have me restored to you," said the young man, with a penetrating gaze into the aged, grief-worn but now smiling face of his father.

"Ah, my boy! You know it! You know it!" said the old man, in a tone tremulous with deep emotion.

"Strange strength of parental love, for I never was any comfort to you, father," said the invalid, in a pensive voice.

"Don't say that, Jack! You always were my greatest pride and joy in life. For whom have I striven to add riches to riches and honors to honors but for you, my dear son? When you were taken from—ahem!—when you were taken ill and sank into such extreme danger, I was utterly wretched; but now that you are getting well I am so grateful and so happy," fervently declared the old lord.

"That is well, so far, then," murmured the convalescent, with a strange smile.

"And we shall have a pleasant life together, dear boy! As soon as you are well enough we will travel together. This is the finest season in the year for a pleasant tour."

"Yes, my father, and I will try, indeed, indeed I will, to be all that a son should be to his father. You shall never have cause to complain of me again," said the young man, with some emotion.

"Dear lad! You never *did* give me cause to complain of you," replied Lord John, with a happy smile.

"My father," now inquired the young man, with wistful earnestness, "look at me well! Has not my illness made a very great change in me?"

Lord John drew his glasses from his pocket, put them on and bent over his son to scrutinize his face, and then said:

"Dear boy, you know that my sight is not very good; but, no, I do not think your illness has changed you as much as it might have been expected to do. You are paler and thinner, of course, and the white light on your forehead—the family mark, which is not a blemish, but a beauty—is whiter than ever. That is all the change I notice, lad, but my sight is not very good, you know."

"My father, you *do* look happy," gravely and almost sadly remarked the young man, as he gazed fixedly on the worn but beaming face of the old lord.

"I *am* happy, my dear son, very happy."

"And my recovery has made you so?"

"Of course, dear fellow, nothing else could have satisfied me, and it has, oh! infinitely more than satisfied me. It has raised me from purgatory to paradise."

"Oh, thank Heaven—what have I said?—I mean that I am very glad that you are happy, and I hope—oh! I hope that I may be able always to please you," said the young man, with a sigh of relief, as he closed his eyes and sank into the silence of weariness.

A sign from Dr. Hamilton, who was still sitting near the window, caused Lord John to rise silently and glide over to him.

"My lord," respectfully whispered the physician, "I think that your interview with your son has lasted long enough, for his benefit. You should leave him to sleep, if he can, for the rest of the evening."

"I will do so, unless he himself should wish to talk

with me. I shall send my carriage and horses to the livery, and remain here with him, however, until I can take him home. I can sleep on that sofa, and keep out of his sight when it is best for him that I should do so; but I will not leave the premises until I can take him with me," said the old lord, with a touch of his natural obstinacy.

"As your lordship pleases; but you will find the plan a very fatiguing one."

"Sir! I shall find in it the very elixir of life! But, hark ye, Doctor! Has—has—*his* wife been to see him?" questioned Lord John, dropping his voice to the lowest whisper.

"His wife? No, my lord, of course not! She does not even know of his resuscitation. *You* were the first and only one outside the family informed of it."

"Ah, yes; to be sure. But has he inquired for her?"

"No, my lord; not yet. Remember that only this morning he recovered his consciousness."

"Yes, yes; I see. Doctor, how long do you think it may be before I can take him home?"

"Three days from this, if he should continue to improve, you might do so; but it would be safer to leave him here for a week."

"Then he shall stay here a week longer, if Dr. Morris will give us both house-room, for I will not run the slightest risk of his health in removing him," said the old man, firmly.

While he spoke there was a sound of wheels rolling up and stopping before the house.

Lord John looked out of the window, and saw Dr. Morris just getting out of his gig.

"Morris has come. I will go down to the office and

speak to him," said the old man, leaving the room for the purpose.

At the foot of the second fall of stairs he found the doctor handing his hat and cane to the man-servant, and drawing off his gloves.

"Any one been to see me while I was out, Len?" he inquired.

"No, Marse Doctor; not a soul," replied the negro.

"But, Morris, here am I waiting for you, all the same. If you are not too tired, will you give me an interview in your office?" inquired Lord John, as he descended the lowest step.

"Certainly, certainly, my lord, with great pleasure. Pray walk in and take a chair," replied the doctor, while black Len officiously opened the office door on the right of the hall, and stood bowing and holding it open.

The two gentlemen talked together over the condition and prospects of the invalid upstairs; and an arrangement was made by which the old lord was to remain an inmate of the house until such time as he should be able to take his son home to The Hill.

"And then, when people hear what has happened, there will be a town talk, and I hate a town talk!" said the old gentleman, for the first time recollecting that necessary attendant of his son's restoration.

"Well, my lord, I think we can stand it, under the circumstances; and all we need to say to the public in explanation is, that in attempting an autopsy signs of life were discovered and resuscitation was effected. We are not *obliged* to give even that much explanation," said Dr. Morris, with a smile, as they separated—the doctor to make some calls on very sick patients, and the old lord to resume his watch by his son, in whose room he had a bed made up that night, and with whom he stayed

for five days, at the end of which Mr. Daw was pronounced well enough to ride in an easy carriage, and Lord John took his recovered treasure home to The Hill.

He was right in his previsions—the resuscitation of his heir was the sensation of the day—almost the only theme of conversation in the city.

Lord John had fully intended to inform his daughter-in-law and her family of the strange restoration of his son; but he wished to do this in person, and as he could not, upon any pretext whatever, leave his beloved invalid while they remained at the Navy Yard, he put off this obvious duty until they were settled again at The Hill.

He noticed that his son had never mentioned the name of Eldiva or of any of the family at Shadow Hall, and he wondered at the omission, yet on his own part refrained from introducing the subject until they had been at home nearly a week, and Mr. Daw had grown so much better as to be able to walk a short distance about the grounds.

Then, as the father and son sat together in an arbor, one fine October afternoon, Lord John said:

"My dear boy, would you not like to see—your wife?"

The young man started violently and turned deadly pale.

"You were fully reconciled to her, you know, my boy," added the old lord, whose half-blind eyes had failed to detect the signs of agitation on his son.

The young man, trembling, made no reply.

"And so it seems to me she ought to be informed of your resusci—convalescence," continued Lord John, catching himself up where he had nearly tripped.

Still the invalid remained silent.

"Shall I go myself and bring her to you?" inquired the old lord.

This seemed to rouse the young gentleman, for he hurriedly exclaimed:

"Oh, no! not that! Heaven of Heavens! not that!"

The old lord grew very much alarmed.

"My *dear* boy!" he said, "do not excite yourself! You'll be ill again! You need not see your wife if you do not wish to——"

"No, no, not—not yet!" exclaimed the young man, nervously.

"You shall not see any one until you are ready to do so," said the old lord, soothingly, and the subject was dropped.

So it happened that the first news of the resuscitation of Lord John Daw's son reached the family at Shadow Hall through the newspaper.

It was the middle of October, when the family were seated at breakfast in the gay-pictured dining-room. There were present Zora Roslyn, Eldiva Daw, Lance and Nea. Old Biggs was waiting on the table. The talk turned rather sadly on Lance's approaching departure, for the young midshipman's six months' leave was nearly out, and he expected to go to Norfolk to join the man-of-war *Delaware,* bound for the East Indies, on November first.

"You will be twenty-one by the time we see you again, Lance," said Zora Roslyn, who was almost ready to cry.

"And Nea will be fifteen—almost a young woman," said the youth, assuming a gay tone to divert his sad friends.

"Oh, Lance! remember what you have so often promised me—if I should not live to see you return, be a true brother and kind protector of your poor little step-

sister," said Zora, with the irrepressible tears now starting in her eyes.

"Oh, I will, mamma, I will indeed! There is no one in the world I love so well as Nea, and no one else whom I have to care for," said the boy.

"How long will you be gone on this voyage, Lance?" inquired Eldiva.

"Three years, or more, I expect," replied the midshipman.

"Three years is forever," said Nea.

"Oh, no, dearest! I was gone three years on my last voyage, yet I came back to you," said Lance, cheerfully.

"Oh! but it seemed forever—all my life," complained Nea.

At this moment there came a knock at the front door, and Old Biggs went to see who was there.

He returned in a few minutes and put the *Intelligencer* into the hand of his mistress, saying merely:

"De morning's paper, ma'am."

"Look at it if you wish to, Lance. It is full of the coming November elections, and I don't take any interest in politics," said the lady, passing the paper over to the youth.

Lance received it with a bow, and began to glance over the pages, reading the head lines only, until on the third page a paragraph fixed his attention.

In another moment he started, changed color, stared at the lines under his eyes, and finally got up with the paper in his hand and left the table.

"What is the matter, Lance? Where are you going?" inquired Mrs. Roslyn, while Eldiva gazed after him, and Nea listened for his answer.

But the youth had hurried out of the room by the

door that led into the old-fashioned garden and there, after a few minutes, Mrs. Roslyn found him seated in the round summer-house, intent upon the article he was reading in the *Intelligencer*.

"Lance," said the lady, sitting down beside him, "what have you found in the newspaper to interest you so deeply?"

"It is—it is—something about the—the—body of Mr. John Daw," faltered the youth, scarcely raising his staring eyes from the paper.

"Oh! have the vault robbers been traced? Is the body found?"

"Yes—no—yes; it has come to life!" exclaimed Lance, rather confusedly.

"*What?*" demanded the perplexed lady.

"It has come to life! Ugh! It is enough to make your hair rise on your head! It has come to life! Read this," said the youth, pointing to the head lines which had first attracted his own attention.

Zora Roslyn looked and read:

THE CASE OF MR. JOHN DAW

REMARKABLE INSTANCE OF RESUSCITATION AFTER SUPPOSED DEATH

"Lance! Lance! For the love of Heaven, Lance, what does this mean?" demanded the amazed woman.

"Don't you see? It means that he came to life! The doctors were trying to steal a *post-mortem* examination the night immediately after the funeral! They got the body into the keeper's cottage, and then discovered signs of life, and succeeded in resuscitating the man; but he was really very far gone, so that he had been in the hands of the doctors ever since until a few days ago,

when his father was informed of the facts and carried his convalescent son home to The Hill. But there! Read for yourself! It will make your hair stand on end, I tell you!"

"But—do you mean to say that John Daw, whose funeral we attended some weeks ago, is—ALIVE?" demanded the astonished woman.

"Alive and at home!"

Zora Roslyn, still agape with wonder, seized the paper and read the article with eager haste.

"I never heard of such a thing in my life?" exclaimed the lady, as, after having finished reading, she continued to stare at the paper. "Yes, I have heard and read of such cases, but I never could have believed in them!"

"What will Diva say? You must get her away somewhere upstairs and tell her; she won't believe it, though," remarked the young man.

"No," said Zora Roslyn, after a thoughtful pause, "no, I will not tell her yet. This may be a cruel hoax. Keep the paper out of her sight. Hint not a word of what we have just read; but go and harness Peggy to the gig. You must drive me up to The Hill. I must hear the truth from Lord John himself, before I can venture to tell Eldiva anything about it."

Lance, like any other youth of his age, was always ready to drive—anybody, anywhere, at any time, on any terms. He folded up the paper lightly, thrust it into his pocket, and ran out of the garden and through the alley into the stable yard to harness up, while Zora Roslyn returned to the house and prepared for her expedition.

"What was the matter with Lance!" inquired Eldiva, meeting her on the staircase.

"Oh, a sudden qualm," said Mrs. Roslyn, truthfully, but rather evasively.

"Oh! I thought it was something he saw in the paper; but if Lance *will* eat soft crabs, why—he must take the consequences, that is all!"

And the ladies passed each other on the steps.

Fifteen minutes later, Mrs. Roslyn and Lance were seated side by side in the old gig, and bowling along up New Jersey Avenue on their way to The Hill.

In due time, they turned into the heavily wooded grounds, now glowing in all the richest hues of autumn, and drew up before the handsome massive portico.

"Is Lord John Daw at home?" inquired Mrs. Roslyn of the servant who opened the door to them.

"Yes, ma'am," was the prompt answer of the man, as he took the visitors' cards, showed them into a small reception-room and vanished.

The two had scarcely time to look around themselves, when the footman returned and asked them to walk upstairs.

They followed their conductor up to a superb drawing-room, upholstered in ebony, white brocade and silver, and there left them.

In a few seconds Lord John Daw entered the room, bowed with old-fashioned courtesy, and then advanced and shook hands cordially with his visitors.

Zora Roslyn was trembling so much that she scarcely dared to trust herself to speak, especially as Lord John had calmly seated himself before her, folded his hands on his knees and seemed waiting patiently for her to open the conversation.

It was useless to try to talk of the weather, or to seem at ease; she felt obliged to plunge at once into the breathless subject.

"Excuse me, dear Lord John, but—have you seen—this morning's *Intelligencer?*" she nervously inquired.

"Yes, my dear madam, I *always* see it," politely replied the old lord, with a slight smile at his visitor's embarrassment, which he perfectly understood.

"There was an article in it—an article—there was an article——"

"About the resuscitation of a man supposed to be dead," added the old gentleman, by way of helping the lady out of her difficulty.

"Yes—yes—yes, sir! Yes, my lord! And—and—was it—was it——"

"Perfectly true? Yes, my dear, distressed soul, it was perfectly true! Now, do not, dear lady, ask me any more questions, for I can tell you no more than you may have read in the paper. Compose yourself and take a glass of wine," said Lord John. And he arose, rang the bell and gave the order to the servant who answered it.

"I will ask you no questions about the resuscitation, strange as it was; but you will allow me to ask, how is Mr. Daw at this time?" inquired Zora Roslyn.

"He is convalescent, but he is still in an extremely weak, nervous, and excitable state. We have to keep him very quiet still."

"Eldiva does not yet know of her husband's restoration to life," said Mrs. Roslyn, somewhat reproachfully.

"*You* did not know it five minutes ago," smiled Lord John.

"And had to receive the first intimation of the fact from the public paper," said Mrs. Roslyn, rather accusatively.

"My dear ma'am, I have been longing to communicate the good news to you for days, but had no opportunity

of doing it in person, and I did not wish to do it by proxy, or by letter. However, I had determined to call on you this very day. I did not know the account of the affair would be published, as it was given in so late last night," Lord John explained, in an apologetic tone.

Mrs. Roslyn thought his excuse very unsatisfactory, but she bowed, as in politeness bound, and then inquired:

"Has Mr. Daw expressed any wish to see his wife?"

"No, ma'am; he is not equal to expressing anything on the subject. When I proposed to go and bring her to him, he became so agitated that I trembled for the effect upon his life."

"But that is strange; for when he was supposed to be dying he sent for her," exclaimed Zora Roslyn.

"Yes, I know, I know, but now his nervous system is so shattered by the terrible ordeal through which he has passed, and barely come out with his life—that—that—my dear lady, we must have patience with him for a little while longer," said the old lord, taking his visitor's hand between both of his own and speaking with kindness and deprecation.

Mrs. Roslyn arose to go, saying:

"I must break this news to Eldiva."

"Who will receive it with what the greatest master of expression calls, aptly,

'A defeated joy,'

I fear; but we must have patience with a nervous invalid, my dear lady," said the old gentleman, speaking with such evident sincerity that Zora Roslyn could not suspect him of any secret design to keep the young pair apart.

"Good-by, Lord John," she said; "I hope you will let us know when Mr. Daw is able to see his friends."

"I will do so, dear madam, and hope that the time of separation may be very short," replied the old lord, pressing the hand she had held out to him, and then releasing it.

Lance Roslyn, who had retreated to a bay window, where he had been a distant and almost forgotten witness, now came forward, bowed his adieux to Lord John, and attended his step-mother down to the gig.

"Oh, Lance, how shall I tell Eldiva—first of this strange resuscitation of her husband, and next, his refusal to see her?" inquired Zora Roslyn, as they drove out of the shaded grounds.

"I reckon Diva can stand it. She is strong, and has stood some shocks already," said the boy.

"The *idea* of his refusing to see her!" exclaimed Zora Roslyn, as they reached Delaware Avenue.

"You mustn't blame him! Good Lord! Is not death, burial, and resuscitation in this world enough to disturb the equanimity of any man? The chap has not entirely come to life yet, I reckon!—*Get up, Peggy!* Mamma, we will have to get a new horse and turn old Peggy out to grass," said the young man, as he touched up Pegasus and started him at a faster pace.

They reached Shadow Hall at noon, and found the house in some commotion.

Nea was the first to meet her mother, who entered the front hall while Lance drove the gig through the side alley to the stables.

"Oh, mamma," said the child, "go to Diva! She is walking up and down the floor like a body distracted!"

"What is the matter with her?" inquired Mrs. Ros-

lyn, though she suspected the truth, as she hurried upstairs.

"People have been running in here and telling us all that Mr. Daw is alive, and then asking if it was true. And Mrs. Gamble brought in the *'Telligence* and showed her the piece about it. *Is it true?"* inquired the child, as she followed close to her mother's heels.

"Yes, dear; Mr. Daw is living," said Zora, as she reached the head of the stairs and hurried at once to the door of Eldiva's room, which she entered without knocking.

The girl was walking wildly up and down the floor, but she turned on seeing Mrs. Roslyn, and, white and shaking, ran to her and exclaimed:

"Oh, aunt, is this a fact? Is it? Is it?"

"Yes, my dear girl, it is."

Eldiva dropped into a chair and sank back.

"Do not let this agitate you so much. Such things *have* happened before," continued Mrs. Roslyn.

Eldiva drew a handkerchief from her pocket, and wiped her forehead, drew a deep breath, and inquired:

"How is he?"

"Very much prostrated in body and mind, but still convalescent."

"Shall I go to him at once? Oh, let me go!" said Eldiva, rising as if to prepare for the drive.

"No, my dear; you must not go to him yet. He is in no condition to see you. You must be patient until he is better," said Zora Roslyn.

"But I must and will go to him! He sent for me when he thought he was dying, and I went and stayed with him until the last. We were fully reconciled *then,* and I must go to him now," said Eldiva, persistently.

"But, my dear, *then,* feeble and failing as his body

was, his mind was clear and calm. Now, love, it is not only his body but his mind that is very much affected. And like many another, under such circumstances, he seems to have taken a nervous antipathy to those he loves the best."

"You—you are trying to let me know that *he*—my invalid husband—refuses to see me!" said the young lady, in an excited manner.

"Yes, Eldiva, that is it. But his horrible ordeal has affected his brain temporarily, and he is not morally responsible for what he says or does."

"Oh! I understand it all but too well," bitterly muttered the young wife. "He is restored to life, but not to me!"

"Do not say that, Eldiva! When he is restored to reason he will be restored to you."

"No, Aunt Zora, no! I understand the situation better than any of you do! In his letter of repudiation, written last summer, he told me that we should never meet again on earth, unless at the deathbed of one or the other. He thought he was on his deathbed and he summoned me to his side. I went and we were reunited."

"Never to be parted again, Eldiva."

"But now that he is brought to life he sends me back to my humiliating position of a repudiated wife!"

"No, no, you must not say so, indeed! It is not just, it is not true," expostulated Mrs. Roslyn.

"We shall see," said Eldiva.

Eldiva was right—they did see. A week passed without any letter, message or visit from The Hill.

The only news they got of Mr. Daw was through Dr. Hamilton.

Zora Roslyn, on the first occasion of her meeting the

family physician, reproached him for not having advised her earlier of the restoration of Mr. Daw.

"My dear madam, it was not my secret, but my brethren's of the faculty. I was not at liberty to tell you," the doctor replied.

Every day as he passed Shadow Hall, on his way home, he would call to report Mr. Daw's health, which was constantly improving.

One morning Dr. Hamilton brought startling news.

"Lord John and Mr. Daw will sail for Europe on the 1st of November," he announced to Mrs. Roslyn, whom he found alone.

"Dr. Hamilton, you are the mutual friend and family physician of the Daws and ourselves. Now *do* you not think it is very hard and very strange that Mr. Daw should persist in refusing to see his wife—his most innocent and unoffending wife?"

"Madam," said the doctor, taking her hand and meeting her eyes with gentle gravity, "I am, as you say, Mr. Daw's family physician, but not his father confessor. I am not, therefore, in his confidence. But this I will say to you, that his illness has left his brain and nervous system in so abnormal a condition that you need not be surprised at this eccentricity of action," said the doctor, as he arose to take leave.

"But will Mr. Daw actually leave the country without seeing his wife?" anxiously inquired the lady.

"I do not know, madam. Let us hope that he will not. Good morning, madam," said the doctor, as he left the room.

"Can it be possible that Mr. Daw will leave the country without meeting his wife?" muttered Zora Roslyn to herself. "Surely not! We will wait and hope."

CHAPTER XIX

A STRANGE SCENE

As soon as Dr. Hamilton had left the house Mrs. Roslyn went upstairs to see Eldiva.

She found the young girl in the front bedchamber, seated before a small wood fire that the chill air of the late October day made very welcome. Eldiva still wore her widow's weeds, and looked very pretty in her simple black dress and white mob cap.

"Diva, dear, I think you should leave off that useless mourning now! I can't think why you continue to wear it," said the lady, as she drew up another chair and sat down beside her niece.

"Mourning is always useless, for that matter, Aunt Zora; but I have as much reason to wear it now as ever I had. My husband is still dead—*to me,*" gravely replied the girl.

"Nonsense, Eldiva! the man is weakened in mind as well as in body! as often happens to a patient who has a severe typhoid fever."

"Did he have typhoid fever?"

"The doctors say that immediately after his resuscitation he passed into a typhoid condition; and you know, as I told you before, that the deadly fever often leaves its victims—if they recover at all—for months in a low state of mind as well as body. And this accounts for Mr. Daw's apparent neglect of you."

"Well, Aunt Zora, as soon as he sends for me I will put off my mourning," said the young lady, with a sad smile.

"I think he will send for you very soon, for he is about to travel for his health," observed Mrs. Roslyn.

Eldiva made no reply.

"You do not ask where he is going," said the lady.

"It is no affair of mine," replied the girl.

"But he is going on a sea-voyage—he is going to Europe," said Mrs. Roslyn.

"It is nothing to me, Aunt Zora. John Daw is dead to me. I think of him only in that last, loving, sorrowful farewell at his deathbed—as we supposed it to be," said the young lady, in a tone of calm despair.

"I am sure that he will not go away without taking leave of you, Eldiva," said the elder lady.

Even as she spoke a carriage was heard to drive up and stop before the door, and presently a loud knock resounded through the hall.

Mrs. Roslyn got up and went to the window to look out.

"It is Lord John Daw's chariot! I am sure he brings news of some sort!" she hurriedly exclaimed.

Eldiva looked up with revived interest.

A moment after, Old Biggs came into the room with a card on a small tray, and took it to Eldiva.

"Whom did his lordship ask to see?" inquired the young girl, in an agitated voice.

"*You,* Miss—ma'am, I mean—w'ich were the reason w'y I handed of the card."

"Tell his lordship that I will be down immediately," said Eldiva.

"There! I said he had come with news! And now I know he has, or he wouldn't have asked for *you,* particularly. Go down at once, my dear," urged Mrs. Roslyn.

And, in fact, Eldiva lost no time, but hurried down

to the drawing-room, where she found the old gentleman walking up and down the floor with his hands clasped behind him.

He turned as she entered, and advanced to meet her.

"Ah, my dear little daughter, I am so glad to see you!" he exclaimed, with a beaming smile, as he folded her to his heart and kissed her.

"I am glad to see you looking in such good health and spirits, my lord," she said, warmly responding to his affection.

"Ah! why should I not be well and happy, when my dear boy is given back to me!" exclaimed the old man.

"I hope—he is—getting better," said Eldiva, feeling obliged to say something.

"Yes; and he will get well, but slowly, slowly, my dear. And the doctor has ordered a sea voyage as the best thing for him——"

"Excuse me; you are standing all this time. Pray, take a chair, Lord John," said Eldiva, to mask her own trembling anxiety.

"No, thank you, my dear; I have not time to stay. I came to take you up to The Hill to see your husband. He must see you and bid you good-by before he leaves the city," explained Lord John.

"Did he—did he—ask to see me?"

"Of course he did, my dear child. And I came to fetch you. *He* would have come, but the doctors would not let him stir until he starts on his journey. They say he must save all his strength for that."

"It has been some days since he was pronounced convalescent. Why has he not sent for me before this?" gravely inquired the young wife.

"My dear, have you not heard? His mind has been unsound ever since his return to consciousness—a fre-

quent effect of typhoid fever; but it will pass off. He is wild to see you now. Go, love, and get ready as quickly as you can, and I will wait here for you," said the old gentleman, leading her to the door, and handing her out, as if he took it for granted that she would go with him.

Eldiva ran upstairs to her own room, where Mrs. Roslyn was anxiously expecting her.

"Well, what news?" inquired Zora.

"Lord John and Mr. Daw are going to Europe. Mr. Daw has sent for me to bid him good-by. He is as yet too weak tc come to me," said Eldiva, as she hastened to a closet and took out her bonnet and shawl.

"I should think if he were too weak to come here, he would be too weak to go to Europe," said Zora.

"He is saving his strength, by the doctors' orders," said Eldiva, as she put on her bonnet.

"Widow's crape! For goodness' sake, Diva, don't wear *that* when you are going to see your sick husband!" exclaimed Mrs. Roslyn.

"Oh! I—in my hurry, I forgot. I must run up to the garret and get out one of my colored bonnets that were packed away when I went into mourning."

She flew out of the room and up the attic steps, and after a few minutes, came down again with her black dress changed for a garnet-colored silk suit, a garnet-colored velvet hat, and cream-colored kid gloves, and a rich India shawl.

"Ah! thank Heaven! Now you look a little more like life!" exclaimed Mrs. Roslyn, as she impulsively kissed her niece, and sent her down to meet her father-in-law.

"Ah, my little daughter, now you look like yourself!" smiled Lord John, as he came to meet her, and led her out to the carriage.

"I do not remember ever to have seen you look so happy, my lord," said Eldiva, when they were seated side by side and rolling up New Jersey Avenue toward Capitol Hill.

"I never *have* been so happy, my darling, never! To have an only son, deemed dead, brought back to life, is a joy that no one but he who has it can understand," said the old gentleman, with such a radiant smile that Eldiva felt as glad and thankful on his account as on her own that John Daw had been restored to life.

The horses were driven fast and soon reached The Hill, entered the grounds, passed up the shaded, semi-circular avenue, and drew up before the door.

Lord John alighted with more agility than she had ever seen him show, handed Eldiva from the carriage, then he gave her his arm, and led her up the front steps to the door.

It was opened to his knock by the porter.

"I will myself take you up to John's room and leave you to go in. Your first interview must be a *tête-à-tête*," said Lord John, as he led his daughter-in-law into the house.

She nodded and they went upstairs together to the first floor.

"Here is his room. Go in, my dear," said the old gentleman, as he turned the handle, opened a door and then walked away.

Eldiva entered and found herself, not in the apartment formerly occupied by Mr. John Daw, but in a lofty, spacious chamber upholstered in rosewood and blue damask, and having a deep bay window, which, with two other lofty windows and the Arabian bedstead, were all draped with blue curtains, now drawn closely, and giving a very subdued light.

Coming out of the bright October sunshine into this blue-shaded chamber, Eldiva at first only dimly discerned a fair, pale man in an India dressing-gown, reclining in an easy-chair, within the bay window.

Supposing him to be her husband, of course, she advanced toward him.

He arose and came to meet her, holding out his arms.

"My love! my love!" he murmured, as he folded her to his bosom.

She dropped her head upon his shoulder and burst into tears—tears from mingled sources of joy, grief and fear of—she knew not what.

He drew her gently to a sofa, placed her on it, sat down beside her, and put his arm around her waist and drew her close to his side, murmuring:

"Dearest, dear Eldiva, how I wish that you would go with me abroad!"

"And why can I not, John?" she asked, amid her choking sobs, as once more she dropped her head upon his shoulder.

"Ah, love! the doctors will not let me take you. They declare that I must go to sea and that I must have perfect quiet on the voyage. They urge that the presence of my wife on one of those uncomfortable merchant and passenger ships would only add to my care and anxiety, and so, my dear, they are as firm as fate in denying me the solace of your company; so we must be patient," said the young man, in a soothing tone, as he held her close to his heart and pressed repeated kisses on her lips.

"When do you go?" she inquired, sadly.

"The day after to-morrow, dear love."

"Oh, that is very soon!"

"Too soon, my own love, but it cannot be helped," he

sighed, and while he spoke he never ceased to caress and kiss her.

"Oh, how long will you be gone?" was her next plaintive question.

"Eight months at the very longest. If we should be so fortunate as to have good weather and quick voyages, not so long as that. And when I return, dear love, I hope—I hope that we shall meet never, never to part again.

"Oh, I hope so! I hope so! It seems to me that there is nothing in the world worth separating for, unless it be, as in this case, a matter of life or death! I shall live on the hope of your return," she said, as she raised her head from his shoulder and wiped her eyes. The light was clearer now, or her sight had become more accustomed to the soft shadows of the beautiful room, for she could see objects clearly.

"You love me, then? You *do lo*ve me!" he exclaimed, catching and straining her passionately to his bosom, and pressing ardent kisses on her lips and brow.

Something in his manner or tone or look caused her suddenly to push him from her and gaze into his face until her eyes became dilated as by surprise or horror, and her gaze became a fixed stare.

"What is the matter with you, dearest love? What do you see?" he inquired, in rather a low and faltering tone, as he once more attempted to draw her to his bosom.

But she pushed him back, started up and covered her face with her hands, muttering:

"Am I dreaming? Am I dreaming, or have I suddenly gone crazy?"

"Eldiva, dearest love," began the young man.

She dropped her hands and stared at him fixedly again.

He arose and approached her, holding out his arms imploringly.

"No! no! For Heaven's sake, no!" she cried, lifting her hands to ward off his approach.

"If you *knew* how I loved you!" he pleaded, still holding out his arms, but not attempting to draw a step nearer to her.

"Be silent, for *mercy's* sake! Have you not done me harm enough?—harm enough, great Heaven!—but that you should——"

"Eldiva! pardon me! Pardon a man driven to desperation by love for you!" he pleaded, clasping his hands and dropping his head upon his chest, but advancing no step nearer to her.

"Be silent, I say! I do not know how I bear this—why I do not swoon, or die, or go mad! It is enough to make me do either!"

The young man sank back to his seat on the sofa, and dropped his arms to his sides. He was deadly pale, but she did not perceive it, for she scarcely looked at him as she continued pitilessly:

"No, I do not know how I can bear this, unless it is because I have been lately inured to severe shocks, and have been partly prepared for this by feeling a sort of unreality in all that has befallen me lately."

"Eldiva!" he cried, in an impassioned tone, "I ask not this for my own sake, but for my father's—for Lord John Daw's sake—do not denounce me to him. It would break his heart! He is now so happy! In mercy to him forbear to expose me!"

The young lady paused thoughtfully for a few moments, and then answered, gravely:

"If you can satisfy me upon *one* vital point."

"I will do so if I can. What is it?"

She stooped and whispered a very grave question.

He whispered back his reply, and then, in a weak voice, added:

"And now in mercy to *him,* you will keep my secret?"

She answered solemnly, looking into his haggard face:

"In mercy to him, I will keep your secret while he lives; but in justice to others, I will reveal it when he dies."

"Thank you! Bless you, Eldiva! Bless——" His voice altered.

She looked at him quickly, and uttered a slight cry, for his head had sunk upon his chest, his eyes closed, and his face faded to a deathly pallor.

She flew to him and took his hand, but it was limp within her own. She felt his pulse, but it had ceased to beat.

Wild with alarm, she flew to the bell and rang it quickly.

Lord John Daw was not far off, as may be readily supposed. He entered the room before any servant could answer the bell.

"What is the matter, my love?" he inquired, in some trepidation, as he hurried toward Eldiva, who was then trying to arrange the swooning patient into an easier position.

"He has fainted, my lord, he has fainted!" replied the young lady.

"Ah! Heaven! the interview was too much for him! I feared it would be, in his state!" exclaimed Lord John, first taking his son's hand and feeling his pulse, and then going to a little stand of medicines, pouring a

cordial restorative from a bottle into a little glass, and bringing it to the patient.

At that moment a footman entered in answer to the bell.

"Go and fetch Dr. Hamilton immediately," said Lord John.

The man bowed and disappeared.

The patient on the sofa opened his eyes wearily.

"Do not speak, John, dear lad. Lie very still for a little while," said the old lord, gently, as he sat by the side of his son and bathed his head.

Eldiva drew a chair to his side and begged to relieve him of his duty, but the old gentleman would not give way.

"No, love, no," he said. "I am accustomed to this sort of thing. Do not be alarmed. The doctors say that he will be subject to these fainting spells for some little while longer; that any excitement may bring them on. That is why they recommend quiet."

While the old man spoke the door opened, and Dr. Hamilton entered the room. He had not seen the messenger just sent to summon him in haste. He had just happened to arrive then on his usual afternoon visit.

"He has had another ill turn, Doctor," said Lord John.

"Ah! I see. Some undue agitation. We must guard against that sort of thing," replied the physician, as he approached the sofa and bowed to the lady and gentleman seated near.

Eldiva arose and made way for the doctor to approach his patient.

But, as she did so, the latter slightly beckoned her to stoop down and listen to him; and when she did so, he said:

"Bid me good-by now and go."

"Good-by," she said, stooping very low to add, in a whisper: "For his sake I will keep your secret as long as he lives, but no longer."

The father and the physician both thought that she had kissed him, but they were mistaken, of course.

"He will do well," said Dr. Hamilton, after a very brief examination. "This is but a very slight attack; but we must avoid its repetition."

Meanwhile, Eldiva had put on her hat and shawl and was now drawing on her gloves.

"Will your lordship be so kind as to order the carriage for me?" she said.

Lord John arose and rang the bell, and then said:

"My dear, I am very sorry for all this. But have fortitude and patience. The sea voyage will restore him, and I will bring him back to you in full health of body and mind, and you will both 'live happy ever after,' as the fairy stories say."

A footman entered in answer to the bell and saved Eldiva the embarrassment of having to reply.

"Have the carriage brought around to the door for Mrs. John Daw," said Lord John.

When Eldiva reached home, Mrs. Roslyn flew down the stairs and met her in the front hall.

"Well!" she exclaimed, anxiously—"well!"

"Let us go upstairs, auntie, before we talk," replied the girl.

"You look awfully pale and wild, Eldiva. What has happened?" anxiously demanded Zora Roslyn, when they had reached the upper chamber and the girl had thrown off her bonnet and shawl, tossed them on the bed, and cast herself into an armchair.

"I have had an agitating interview," she answered,

nervously jerking at her gloves until she had pulled them off.

"So I suppose. But I hope it was a full reconciliation."

"It can scarcely be called a reconciliation, since there had been no recent quarrel."

"Yes, but there certainly was a misunderstanding," persisted the elder lady, drawing a chair to the side of her niece and seating herself.

"Yes, there was a misunderstanding," assented Eldiva.

"And—is that set right?"

"We understand each other perfectly now, dear Aunt Zora," replied the girl, in a much gentler tone, and feeling conscious that she had been curt in her previous replies.

"That is well, my love. Now tell me all about it. How is this to end? I had fully expected that you would have remained at The Hill and sent for your wardrobe. Perhaps you have come back to pack it, however. Now tell me all, my dear. Is he really going alone, or are you to get ready in a hurry to go with him?"

"He is really going alone, auntie, and I have bidden him a final good-by," said Eldiva, firmly.

"Well, I do think his behavior altogether is the very strangest I ever heard of in all my life! I do think the man must be a little—touched in his brain."

"Dr. Hamilton has a theory of his case, which he will no doubt give you. I refer you to Dr. Hamilton. And, *dear* Aunt Zora, as this subject is inexpressibly painful to me, I beg you *never, never* to speak of it in my hearing again. Talk to Lord John, if you like, when he comes to bid you good-by, or to Dr. Hamilton at any

time; but *never,* I implore you, to me," said Eldiva, suddenly losing all her wonderful self-control and bursting into a paroxysm of tears and sobs.

"I will not, love, since it hurts you so. And no wonder that it does, poor, dear child!" replied the lady, tenderly.

"Aunt Zora," said the girl, as soon as she could speak again, "I think if you can spare me, I would like to go away somewhere. I cannot bear the thought of staying here in this city."

"Dear child, that is natural enough. And though I should miss you very much, I would have you go wherever you would feel happier. Where would you like to go?"

"Oh! I don't quite know. Anywhere away from the city. Down to some of our relations in St. Mary's."

"To Bloomfield?"

"Yes, that is the best place, Aunt Zora, and I wish to go as soon as possible."

"Lance leaves us on Saturday to join his ship at Norfolk. You will stay to see him off, Eldiva?"

"Oh! yes; that will not be long. Everybody is going away on Saturday, it seems. That is the day Lord John and his party go."

"Very well, dear; then, if you please, you shall go on the Monday following. Will that suit you?"

"Oh! yes," said the girl, wearily, as she arose and threw herself upon the bed, with an air of exhaustion.

"That is right. Rest yourself. Do not come down to supper. I will send you up a cup of tea and a piece of toast, or anything else you like," said Zora Roslyn, rising to leave the room.

"That will do. Send nothing else," sighed Eldiva, throwing her arms upon the pillow.

Mrs. Roslyn went downstairs.

And when Eldiva had drunk the cup of tea brought up by Aunt Apple she undressed and went to bed.

The next morning Eldiva appeared at breakfast pale, worn, anxious—and wearing her widow's dress and cap.

Zora Roslyn opened her eyes in astonishment, but made no comment.

Lance, who had seen his cousin in no other dress for the last six weeks, and who was as indifferent on the subject as young men usually are, did not think anything about it.

And little blind Nea did not even see it.

Zora Roslyn thought her niece was about as eccentric as that niece's half-crazy husband; but as the subject had been tabooed she forbore to express this opinion. In the course of the day Lord John Daw called to bid the family good-by.

Every member of the little circle went down into the drawing-room to see him, and he spoke to all with the warmth of friendliness inspired by his present happiness; but he called his daughter-in-law to sit by him on the sofa.

Observing her black dress and widow's cap with surprise, he exclaimed:

"Why, my dear, have you not left off those?"

"Because—I am still a widow, if not in fact, certainly in fate," gravely and gently replied the young creature, adding, "I shall wear mourning until your return."

This implied compliment to himself and his son seemed to please the old lord very much.

"You dear, good child, this is hard for you to bear," he said; "but take courage; do not mope, but go out and

enjoy yourself and look forward to a happy meeting next summer!"

Then there were more last words to be said, promises to be given and received of writing by every transatlantic mail.

And finally the old gentleman folded his daughter-in-law to his bosom, kissed her on both cheeks, shook hands with all the rest of the family, and went away.

As soon as he was gone, Zora Roslyn hurried off to finish packing Lance's sea chest.

The next morning Lance took leave of all his friends —Nea was weeping—and started for Norfolk in the schooner *Pigeon Wing* to join his ship, the frigate *Sea Horse,* bound for the coast of Africa.

Zora Roslyn did a wise thing. She let her little daughter exhaust her first paroxysm of agonizing sobs and tears, and then when the child had become quiet, she took her up to the city to visit the Female Orphan Asylum, and show her the meek little motherless girls there, whose state would be sure to touch the heart of little Nea and make her forget to cry over her own woes.

In the meantime Eldiva did a strange thing.

As soon as Zora Roslyn and Nea had walked away from the front door Eldiva went into the house, called Gad, the waiter, and ordered him to put Peggy to the carriage, and get himself ready to drive. Then she dressed herself in her full mourning, and when the cariole was ready she went down, took her seat in it, and ordered the boy to drive over the bridge to the nearest florist's.

He drove to Boyce's, where Eldiva purchased a number of hardy roses and shrubs that would live outdoors all winter, and took them into the cariole with her.

"Drive to the Congressional Burying Ground," she

said, as she again took her seat. (They didn't call them "cemeteries" in those days.)

Gad nodded, and started his horse at a good pace, and soon reached the great gate of the government graveyard.

Here she ordered Gad to draw up, get down and fasten the horse.

Then she alighted and went alone into the grounds.

One of the gardeners was at work raking up the fallen leaves with which the grass was strewn.

"Can you show me the grave of old Mr. Hugh Condit, the father of the late keeper?" she inquired of this man.

He stopped raking, scratched his head under his hat, and finally answered that he knew nothing about it, but mayhap the new keeper did.

"Where is the new keeper?"

The man pointed to the cottage, and resumed his work.

Eldiva went up to the door, and finding it open walked in, and found herself in the office, where, at a desk, sat a dark-complexioned, hunchbacked man.

"Are you the keeper of this place?" inquired Eldiva.

"Yes, madam," said the hunchback, looking up.

"Can you show me the grave of Hugh Condit?"

"You mean Jonas Condit, the man who was here before me, do you not?"

"No; his father, Hugh."

"I can find it by reference to the books, I suppose. I haven't been here long, and don't know much about the sites; but if you will take a seat, ma'am, I will look."

Eldiva sat down, and the keeper opened a large folio that lay before him, and turned over its leaves until he had found what was wanted. Then he arose, and said:

"I will show you the place, ma'am."

He took down his hat from its peg by the desk, and went out, followed by Eldiva.

He led the way down the main avenue, flanked each side by the uniform monuments of members of Congress, and other government officers who had died in Washington, and then he struck off to the left, and reached, through a by-path, a green hill on the east side, in full view of the Anacostia River, and in which there was one little lot fenced in with a paling painted black with white tips.

The keeper opened the little gate and allowed the lady to pass in.

There were two graves within the inclosure. The headstone of one was old, and green and gray with mould, and bore the name of Hugh Condit, with the date of his birth, and that of his death, which had taken place several years before.

The headstone of the other was new, white and smooth, and bore the name of Jonas Condit, with the date of his birth, and that of his death, which occurred within the current month.

Yet both graves looked equally fresh.

The keeper observed this with some surprise, and even commented on it, saying, however, in explanation:

"I suppose when they sodded the young man's grave they must have filled up and sodded the old un's, else it would never look so fresh."

"Will you kindly do me a favor?" inquired Eldiva.

"Anything in the world I can do, ma'am, is at your service," replied the hunchback.

"Thank you very much; will you be so good, then, as to go to the gate and tell my servant, whom you will

find there, to fetch the flowers from the carriage to this place? And will you lend me some gardening tools, as I wish to plant some roses and shrubs here?"

"Certainly, ma'am, with the greatest of pleasure," said the hunchback, starting off immediately on his errand.

As soon as he was gone, Eldiva threw herself down upon Hugh Condit's grave and gave way to a violent storm of grief.

She had scarcely recovered from it when the keeper returned with his arms full of roses, followed by Gad, loaded down with a similar burden, and carrying a pick and shovel on his shoulder.

"It is a rare good time to plant out roses at this season, when the sap is going down into the roots of the bushes and the November rains soon coming on," said the hunchback, as he laid his treasures on the grass.

Eldiva marked out the spots where she wished to have the holes dug, and, as each was hollowed out, she planted with her own hands a rosebush or a shrub until the little, bare lot looked like a parterre of flowers.

Then again she thanked the keeper, who invited her into his office that she might wash her hands.

And, after this cleansing, she bade the hunchback good-day, called Gad, re-entered the cariole, and was driven back to Shadow Hall.

Mrs. Roslyn and Nea had not yet returned.

Eldiva went to her room, exchanged her carriage-dress for a wrapper, and lay down to rest.

An hour later Zora and Nea came home. Mrs. Roslyn immediately hurried up to Eldiva's room, and exclaimed:

"Well, they have gone!"

"Do you mean Lord John Daw and his party?"

"Of course. Who else should I mean? I met Richard Daly. He told me they left by the early stage for Baltimore on their way to New York, from which port they will sail. Their party filled the inside of one coach."

"I hope they will have a pleasant voyage," said Eldiva.

Mrs. Roslyn stared at the girl, wondering at her calmness, and then went away to take off her bonnet.

On the following Monday, Eldiva, attended by Lymp, as lady's maid, embarked on board Miles Tawney's schooner, and sailed for St. Mary's county and Bloomfield Farm.

And Zora Roslyn and her little daughter, Nerissa, remained together with only their servants at Shadow Hall.

The further career of our heroine, together with the after fate of all the characters mentioned in this work, will be found in the sequel to this volume, just published, under the title of "Little Nea's Engagement," uniform with this volume.

THE END

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